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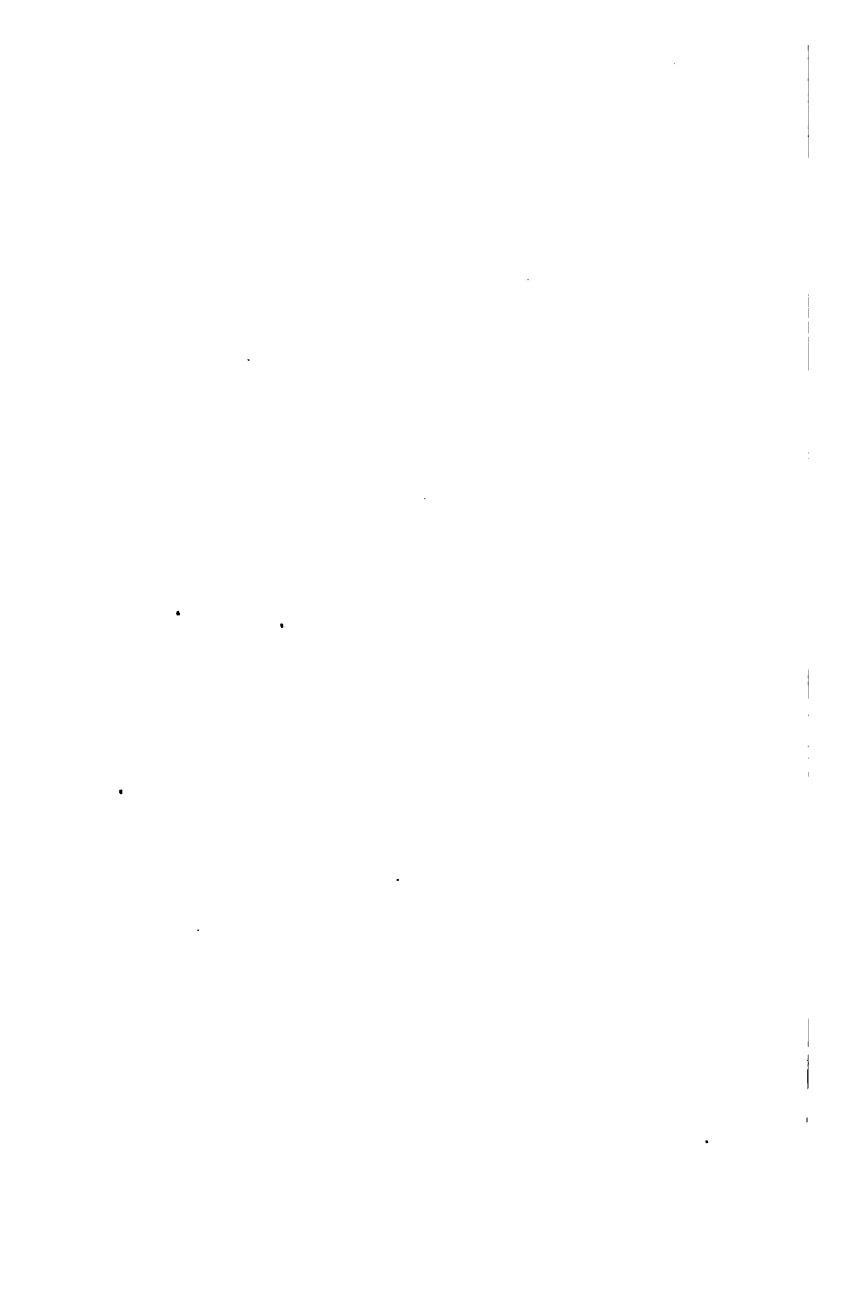
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THE MODEL FAMILY

OR

JESUS AT BETHANY

BY THE

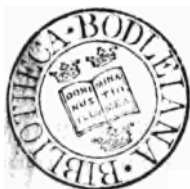
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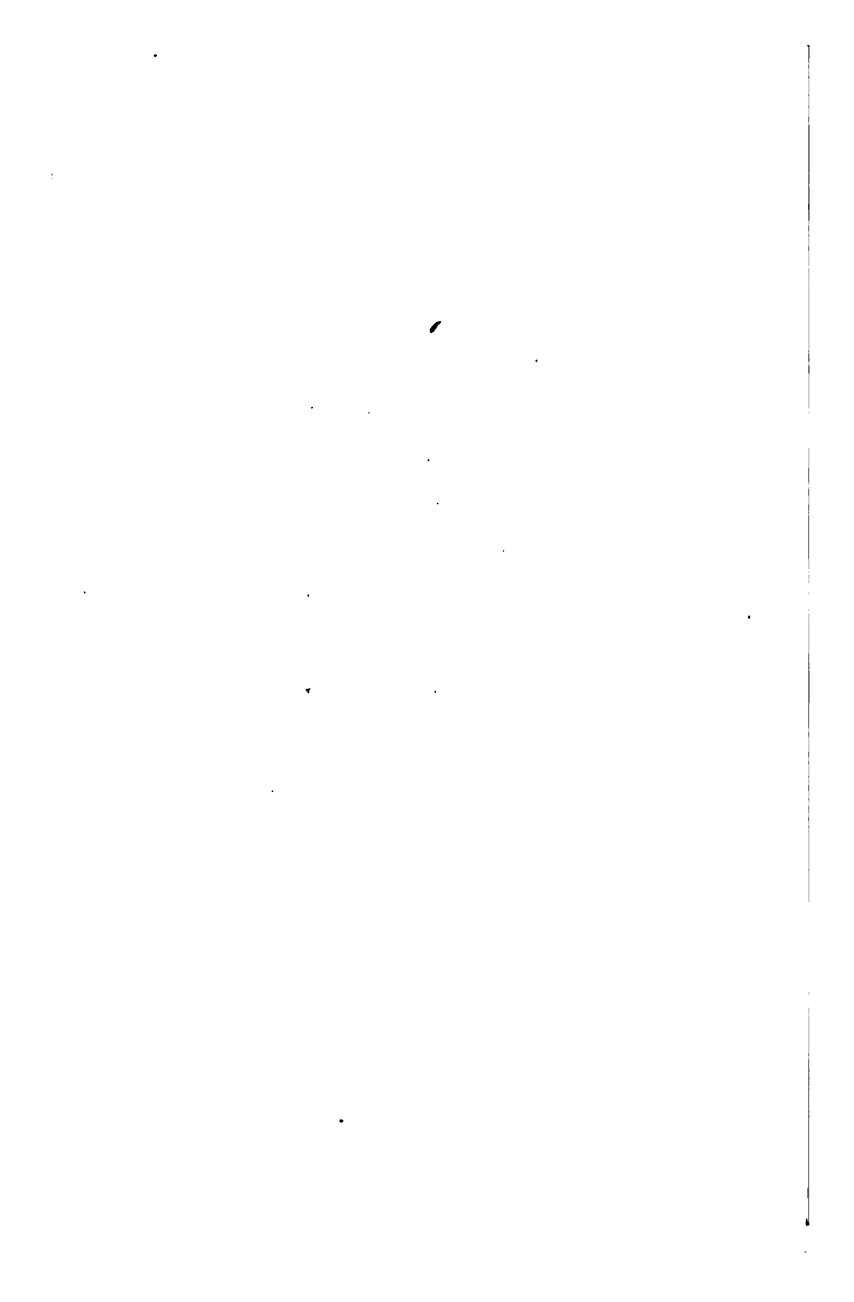
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INTRODUCTION.

THE great lesson taught us by a review of the family of Bethany is, that the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of true happiness. We wish our readers to contemplate grace in the social aspect of it, and to see it hallowing the domestic circle, and sweetening all its enjoyments. Here we have a happy family presented to our view, because it was a holy one. Where Jesus is, there must be a sympathy of pious hearts, and all the peace which this brings along with it.

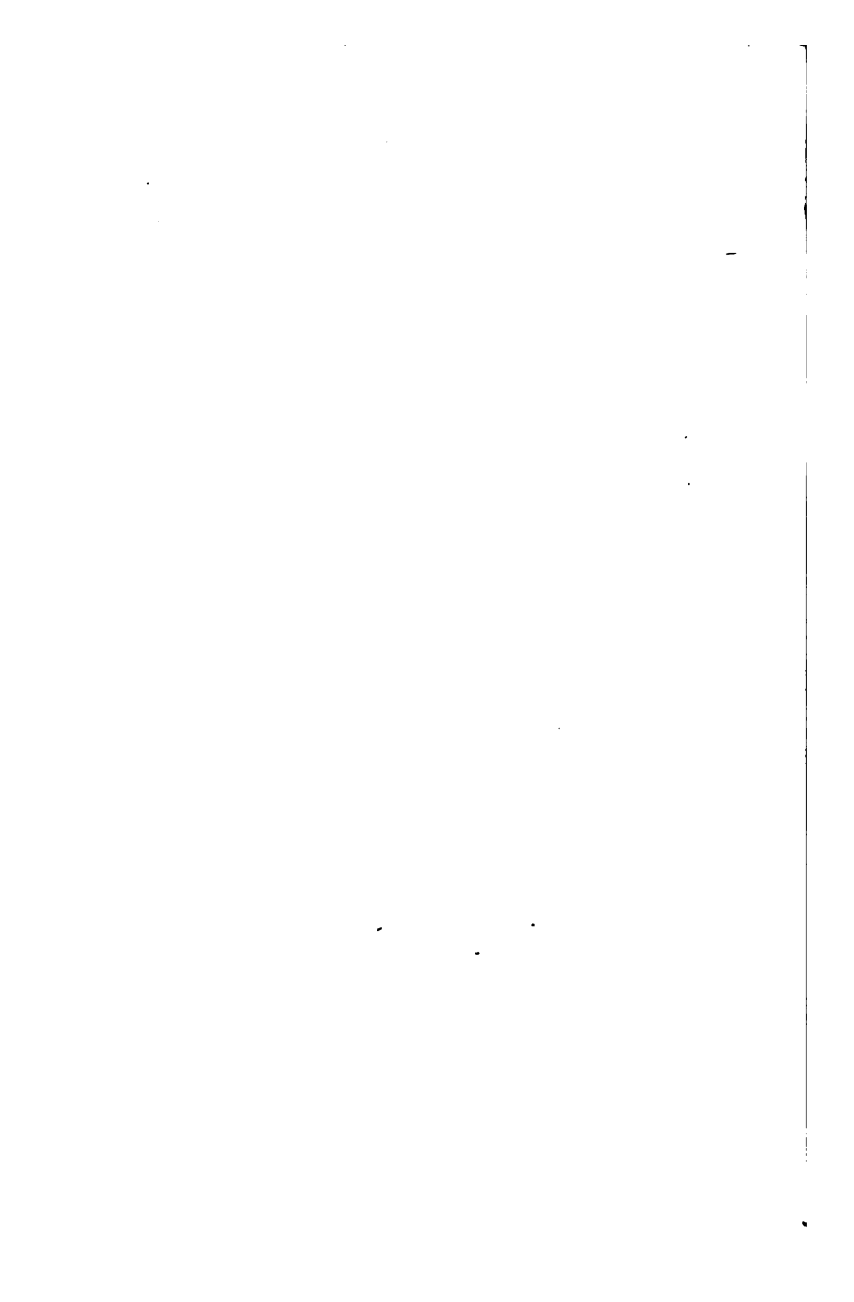
We see here grace extracting good out of evil, and deriving from it improvement to the character. This fulfils the design of a righteous Providence. By means of a salutary discipline, we are now training up to a

meetness for the exercises and enjoyments of a more elevated sphere. The duty incumbent on us is to concur with this gracious arrangement. We are not to be passive spectators of our destiny. We must conspire with the order of Providence in working it out. Holiness is proposed to our choice and pursuit, and is not pressed on us by the mere force of an overbearing necessity.

Looking to this family, who can say that religion is an enemy to social enjoyment? Is the absence of God from our thoughts and employments a condition of happiness? Must we become atheists in heart and practice to taste the sweetness of human life? We point to this family for a refutation of the calumny! We see God constituting the very centre of its system, and all moving in subordination to Him, while the whole aspect of it is brightened with the sunshine of a calm and hallowed peace.

The family of Bethany is the family of heaven in miniature. It is the only happy family! There is but

one set of principles on which this result depends, and here they are exemplified, though on a limited scale. If we have not the whole of heaven, we have at least a part of it. Let us sow the seed, and we will reap the harvest ! Let us cultivate the character, and we will share the reward !



THE MODEL FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY OF BETHANY.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FAMILY—ILLUSTRATES THE CHARACTER OF THE SAVIOUR—HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR IT—ITS SEVERAL MEMBERS DESCRIBED—THE VILLAGE OF BETHANY—ADVANTAGES OF VARIETY OF CHARACTER—MEDITATION AND ACTION BOTH NEEDFUL—CHRISTIAN INTERCOURSE.

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha."—JOHN xi. 1.

THIS verse introduces us to the family of Bethany, where we have presented to us one of the most interesting groups which ever adorned a domestic circle. There is something so sweet and attractive in the scene which it opens up to us, so much of the depth of a pious sensibility, of the guilelessness and simplicity of unsophisticated nature, of the warmth of honest kindness, with its ready and zealous sympathy with the wants and interests of others, that it seems as if a portion of our original paradise had survived the sentence which consigned it to destruction, and had

drifted down the stream of time to find a haven in that little village where it is exhibited to our observation. If all was scathed with the curse of Heaven, and had impressed on it the dark and melancholy traces of its desolation, we cannot but think that a family like this was not included in it, or, at least, that it descended on it in a more light and gentle visitation than on others. It would greatly heighten our impression of the innocence and happiness of a family like this, were we to bring it into contrast with sin in some of the more hateful and revolting aspects of it, when it has reached the maturity of an established character, and breaks out in some form or other of daring and aggravated iniquity. It may riot in a sensuality which knows no restraint, or wanton in a selfishness which makes no account of the rights or interests of others, or vent itself in ebullitions of temper which create a constant annoyance to all around; or, in short, may give full and unbridled sway to every licentious and unhallowed propensity. When we turn from the contemplation of a character like this, to the calm and heavenly repose which breathes around this family of Bethany, it is like a transition from the destructive rage of the driving hurricane, to the sweet and smiling stillness of a summer day.

The most interesting point of view, however, in which this family is presented to us, is as illustrative of the character of the Saviour. It lays bare to us His heart, and shews us the warmth of sacred and tender emotion which had its residence there. The

virtues of this little group had their counterpart in the virtues of the Saviour's character, and shed on them the light of a clear manifestation. We cannot enter this dwelling at Bethany, without obtaining an insight into the sentiments which reigned in the bosom of the Saviour, and gave a direction to His whole conduct. When we see what Lazarus and Martha and Mary were, we see what Jesus was, since they were the objects of His warmest attachment, and He delighted to maintain with them near and friendly intercourse. Let us go then to Bethany to receive fresh instruction as to the character of our Divine Master, and let us submit our understanding to the lessons which are here taught us. Let us look within this domestic circle, and as we mark its several members, let us rise from the contemplation of them to a truer impression of Him of whom they are the representatives. Every one of them is a revelation to us of Christ, and that not merely of the actions which compose His outward history, but of the character and movements of His heart.

We learn from the narrative before us that our Saviour was susceptible to emotions of friendship, and surrendered Himself, without reserve, to those ties of endearment which unite one to another in near and intimate sympathy. He looked with a benign aspect on the whole human family, but certain members of it attracted more of His attention, and engaged more of His esteem, than others. Those motives which lead us to prefer one to another, and to single them out for

our more familiar and confidential intercourse, had also a place in the heart of the Saviour, and determined Him to a similar selection. The emotions we cherish towards a friend are the very same as those we entertain on other occasions, only they are of a more exalted and disinterested character.* It is benevolence purified of every ingredient of selfishness, and glowing with a more intense and kindly sensibility than distinguishes it in the ordinary occasions of its exercise. This is the nature of friendship; and the motives which induce it are similarity of taste and disposition, oneness of sentiment, in one respect or other *an identity of character*. This affinity of mind to mind lies at the foundation of all true friendship, and we cannot doubt that it was the same with our Saviour as to this as it is with ourselves. He had a human heart, and, therefore, he had sensibilities the same as our own. His character was marked by certain peculiar and distinguishing attributes, and these would determine Him to the love of one more than to another. Wherever He saw the image of Himself, He would love it in the same way as we ourselves do. It was on this principle that the apostle John enjoyed more of His regard than any of his brethren. There was in him a sweet and gentle disposition, a warmth and kindliness of sensibility, which seems to have carried a greater attraction to the heart of the Saviour than did the character of any of the rest. It was the same with the family of Bethany. The sweet tranquillity which rested on their dwelling,

* Robert Hall.

the earnest piety which hallowed it, the absence from it of the tumult and fever of carnal ambition, and the inspiration of more pure and spiritual aspirations,—these were what consecrated it in the estimation of the Saviour, and invested it with a charm which drew to it His warmest and His kindest sympathies.

But that we may better understand this friendship of the Saviour, let us dwell a little on the characters on whom it was said to have been bestowed. First we have Mary, a person of singular worth, and whose virtues recommended her to the warmest and most cordial attachment of the Saviour. Her character was, in every respect, congenial to His, and drew from Him a testimony to which little can be added to give to it greater weight or decision. She was a calm and contemplative spirit, whose chief delight it was to retire from the bustle and agitation of the world to converse with unseen and spiritual realities. Meditation was her element; raising her thoughts above the distractions of the busy scene around her, and bringing before her the objects and interests of a more elevated sphere. Her mind was engrossed with its own exercises, and these she relished more than the active engagements of social or domestic life. She sought its improvement in the knowledge of divine things, as what ranked highest in her estimation, and postponed to this every object of inferior concern. Hence, when the Saviour honoured this little family with His presence, Mary was all ear to His instructions, and drank in His heavenly discourse with all the eagerness of an insatiable appetite. She

sat at His feet as an humble disciple, and treasured up in her memory the truths which He communicated, as the subject of frequent and devout meditation. We cannot doubt that, with such a cast of mind, she would often recur to them to discover more of their hidden meaning, and to obtain a deeper insight into the plans and purposes of heaven. She would often carry them to a throne of grace, and derive from them an impulse to her aspirations for the speedy manifestation of the divine kingdom. Such was Mary, in whose character piety was the predominant element, and this, in a great measure, estranging her from the vulgar routine of domestic duty.

The character of Martha was the very opposite to this. Her taste was gratified in the bustle of business and in the scenes of active life. She occupied her mind with the cares of the family, and in providing whatever ministered to its necessities and comfort. She was its *housekeeper*, and took delight in the earnest and diligent fulfilment of those duties which this relation implies in it. When Jesus therefore visited the dwelling, she did not, like Mary, seat herself before Him, the better to catch every word which dropped from His lips. She was engaged in active preparations for the supply of His temporal wants; and to this she directed her whole attention. So intent was she on this object, that she even grudged the absence of Mary, and, on one occasion, made application to the Saviour that He would interpose His authority to bring her to her aid. But Jesus had no sympathy

with this excess of domestic anxiety, and while He ministered to her a gentle rebuke, at the same time expressed His strong approbation of the more spiritual and heavenly character of her sister's solicitude. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." This was as much as to say to her, that her burden of domestic care was not suitable to her present circumstances; that He came to *give* more than to *receive*; and that it better corresponded to His character to sit at His feet in the attitude of a learner, than to seek to regale Him with a sumptuous repast. This incident, however, brings out in bolder relief the character of Martha; and while it shews how much she was immersed in worldly solicitudes, and drudged in the humble occupations of domestic life, it serves to place it in stronger contrast with the calm and ethereal temperament of her more devout sister.

There was a third member of this little family, however—Lazarus himself; but there is little said in the narrative before us to give us an insight into his character. That he was a man of God there can be no doubt, since we are expressly told by the inspired historian that he was the object of the Saviour's regard. But what the peculiar features were which served to individualise him, and to distinguish him from the other members of the family, we have no means of ascertaining. We are warranted, however, in conceiving of him as one who walked with God, who took a warm

and cordial interest in divine things, and who reciprocated that attachment to the Saviour which He cherished with so much tenderness towards him. From the train of the whole narrative, we may represent him to ourselves as a man of great simplicity of character, and of mild and gentle disposition, delighting much more in the sweets of retirement than in the tumultuous agitations of the world, little qualified for the rude encounters of society, and a stranger to its secret arts, breathing good-will to all around, and ready to extend the hand of honest kindness to all who might stand in need of his friendly aid. We cannot doubt that this was the character most attractive to the eye of the Saviour, and which bore the nearest resemblance to His own, considered in its human aspect. This, however, is but a broad and general outline; and with this we must rest contented, since we cannot fill it up with any more minute or specific details.

Such, then, was the family of Bethany in which our Saviour took so marked an interest, and which He so often honoured with His presence. He seems often to have found an asylum there from the bustle of Jerusalem, and from the persecution of that notoriety to which He was exposed. He had only to wind His way up the Mount of Olives, and soon He would find Himself in the calm and peaceful retreat of this sequestered village. A modern traveller has said—"It lies almost hidden in a deep ravine of Mount Olivet, so much so, that from the height it cannot be seen. It is embosomed in fruit trees, especially figs and almonds,

olives, and pomegranates. The ravine in which it lies is terraced, and the terraces are covered either with fruit-trees or waving grain. There are not many houses, perhaps about twenty inhabited, but there are many marks of ancient ruins. The sepulchre called the tomb of Lazarus attracted our attention. We lighted our tapers and descended twenty-six steps cut in the rock, to a chamber dug in the rock, having several niches for the dead. However this may be as to its being the very tomb, there can be no doubt that this is Bethany, 'the town of Mary and her sister Martha, nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.' In point of situation, nothing could have come up more completely to our previous imagination of the place to which Jesus delighted to repair at evening from the bustle of the city and the vexations of the unbelieving multitude,—sometimes traversing the road by which we had come, and perhaps oftener still coming up the face of the hill by the footpath that passed on the north of Gethsemane. What a peaceful scene!"

It would seem, then, that the place corresponds in character with that of the family whose residence it was. It is calm, peaceful, and retired, an image of the Saviour's heart, and of the hearts of all who resemble Him. We may learn from this narrative, however, the advantage of variety of character, and how much it contributes to the general well-being of society at large, as well as of the Church itself. It would not do if all were Marys, nursing their mind to moods of pious meditation, and luxuriating in exercises of devout

retirement. The world would come to a stand, and the interests of domestic life sustain a cruel injury, were all addicted to these serious musings, and accustomed to soar to heaven on these wings of ideal contemplation. Neither would it do if all were Marthas, absorbed in the concerns of the family, and taking but little interest in what does not stand in immediate connexion with its well-being. We must have a mixture of both: the one to breathe into us the spirit of heaven, and to concert measures for the extension of the Saviour's cause; the other to direct their natural activity to the execution of them. For this was the true mission of Martha, and the spirit which animated her—action. This she delighted in much more than in sentiment; her bodily powers were in much greater demand with her than her intellectual, and she relished the business of the one with a taste and feeling which were wholly wanting in regard to the other. We stand in need, then, of the *heart* of Mary, as well as of the *hands* of Martha; the one having a keener eye in the perception of good, the other a more forward zeal in seeking to realise it.

But the same holds true in regard to the individual, as well as the conduct of society at large. There is a necessity here also for a mixture of contemplation and of action. We must not ever be hustled amid the engagements of the world, and cankered with its vexatious solitudes. There must be seasons of devout retirement, that we may recover our scattered powers, and raise them to the survey of invisible realities.

Even our families must not be allowed to engage our whole concern, or to draw to them an attention which must, in a great measure, shut out of view more weighty and important interests. We are ready to practise an imposition on ourselves in this matter, and, because it is our duty, to plead that all is right. But we have other duties besides this, and one of them is to pay frequent visits to our closet, and in its secret retirement to breathe out our hearts in earnest desires after God. This is an age of practical excitement; and while we have all the hands of Martha, there are few of us who have the heart of Mary. The world would appropriate all to itself; but we contend that *God must have His share*. Men of piety who have been doomed to a burden of secular avocations greater than was consistent with the well-being of the soul, have made the most strenuous and persevering attempts to maintain the spirit of religion, even amid the dissipation and engrossment of their worldly concerns. Those who have best succeeded in this have done so by allocating a certain portion of their time to spiritual exercises, and by adhering to this with inviolable constancy. They have secluded themselves to those duties of the closet at the stated seasons in spite of the urgencies of the most pressing business, or whatever other solicitations have been addressed to them. It is thus that we have had men who walked in close communion with God, even when they were adorning some of the most elevated professions in society, and discharging their duties with sacred fidelity.

But there is one rule which even the busiest may observe ; and that is, to sanctify all his employments by an habitual reference to God. Religion does not thus exclude the secular duty, but merely takes it under its own government, and impregnates it with its peculiar spirit. This consecrates all we do to the Divine service, and gives to all our actions a continuity as successive exercises of divine worship. This is to bring the spirit of the Church into the world, and to baptize the latter in the pure and spiritual element of the former. Our whole lives would thus become a work of devotion, and the Sabbath produce in us but little change, except as a cessation from bodily activity. This is the highest reach of spiritual attainment, and what every man of earnest piety will be ambitious to realise. The glory of God cannot always be the object of distinct thought ; but it may thus become the motive which determines our whole conduct. In the same way, as the ruling passion exercises over us a continued mastery, and reduces every action in subserviency to itself, so should the divine honour never remit in its ascendancy over us. It should be the mainspring which sustains in movement the whole machine, though there are other impulses which are no less needful to the action of the several parts. We must look to God as our beginning and our end, whatever principles may actuate us in the intermediate progress.

We see, then, that we must be Marys in the closet as well as Marthas in the world, and that we must seek

to impregnate the activity of the one with the devout and hallowed spirit of the other. We are not to live a life of habitual devotion to the neglect of the duties of our ordinary calling, and much less are we to surrender to those duties to the neglect of the private exercises of devotion. From this analysis, however, of the character of the several members of this little family, we have a distinct view presented to us of the nature of our Saviour's friendship, and what it was which drew to them His heart in such warm and cordial endearment. They were all united to Himself in the bond of a living faith, and this linked them to each other in a tie more strong and intimate than even that of natural consanguinity. The love of Jesus was the supreme affection in the hearts of all of them ; and this sympathy of a common attachment cemented the social union which knit them to each other. To such a family a visit from the Saviour must have been a source of no little refreshment, and must have left behind it a sweet savour of peace and blessedness. Recognising in Him the promised Messiah, and the substance of many an ancient prediction, they must have looked to Him with a reverence the most profound, while the kindly familiarity of His intercourse would woo them into a warm and confiding attachment. If the society of Christian friends and the interchange of brotherly love, in any circumstances, be one of the sweetest and purest sources of spiritual enjoyment, I doubt not, in the experience of this family of Bethany, in their communication with the blessed Saviour, there was realised an

amount of holy delight beyond all that we are able to conceive.

Why does the spirit of brotherly love so little characterise us in the present day? Why do we so little delight in Christian intercourse? and why are the disciples of the Saviour so seldom to be seen in animated converse with one another on divine and spiritual things? The reason is, that they have so little of the love of Jesus in their hearts, and therefore He is seldom the topic of ordinary discourse. They speak of all *connected* with Him, but not of HIMSELF. They discuss the merits of their favourite preachers, or adjust the claims of their respective churches; but as to anything like close and earnest communing with one another on the great objects and interests of religion, it is what is seldom or never to be met with. "They that feared the Lord," says the Prophet, "spoke often to one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." "Come and hear," says the Psalmist, "all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." "I am a companion," he says again, "of all those that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." These passages are surely sufficient to shew the duty incumbent on Christians to hold intercourse with one another, and to introduce into discourse such topics as are connected with the soul and eternity. The inspired writers recommend the exercise by precept as well as example, and state it, in short, to be a

universal and distinguishing characteristic of God's children.

“If, then, we are not ashamed to confess ourselves Christians, let us not shrink from walking in fellowship with Christians. Even if they should exhibit some repulsive features of character, they bear the image of Him whom we profess to love inexpressibly and incomparably above all. They will be our companions in an eternal home; they ought, therefore, to be our brothers now. How sweet and holy and heavenly is this near relation to them in one common Lord! Well may we consent to His judgment, who pronounced ‘the righteous to be more excellent than his neighbour,’ since those who have tasted the benefit of this communion have found it beyond all price. ‘Iron sharpeneth iron.’ If, then, the iron be blunt, this will be one of the means of ‘whetting the edge.’ The most established servants of God gladly acknowledge the sensible refreshment derived from this union of heart.” (Bridges.) But what we complain of is, that there is a great declension in this intercourse of brotherly love, and that it has lost in that warmth and tenderness which at one time characterised it. We have ourselves seen a family make a very near approach in simplicity of character and elevation of pious sentiment to that of Bethany. And what was the consequence? Why, they diffused a rich odour of sanctity on all around, and became the centre of a wide circle of God's people, all desirous to inhale the sweet and hallowed fragrance of their converse. But Jesus himself was present in this intercourse of Christian

friends, because He reigned supreme in every heart. It was He who provided the food for this hallowed entertainment, and the substance of it was Himself. Oh, that there were such families in the midst of us, Bethanies of love and pious converse! "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years."

CHAPTER II.

SICKNESS AND DEATH OF LAZARUS.

FIETY DOES NOT PROTECT FROM EVIL—ALLEVIATIONS OF IT IN
KINDLY ATTENTION OF OTHERS—LESSONS TAUGHT BY ADVERSITY
—DEATH OF LAZARUS—VARIETIES OF DEATH-BED EXPERIENCE—
DEATH COMPARED TO SLEEP.

“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go unto Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”—JOHN xi. 1-14.

No one can read the narrative of the Evangelist as contained in this chapter, without receiving from it a strong

impression, that the family of Bethany was an abode of peace, and enjoyed as much of domestic happiness as is consistent with the present constitution of things. All its members were united to each other by a tie of endearment even more close and intimate than that of natural consanguinity. They were the friends of Jesus, to whom He cherished a warm attachment, and were honoured with His intimacy to an extent of which we have no similar example. He seems often to have visited their dwelling, and, in the sweets of pious intercourse, to have drowned the recollection of those scenes of tumult and disorder He had to encounter in Jerusalem. It might have been expected, therefore, that this little family would have been shielded from the inroads of adversity, and not have been exposed to those visitations of sore distress which embitter the general lot of humanity. We would have the storm to roll innocuous over them, and to reserve its fury for more worthy objects. But in the verses before us, we see it alight on them in all its violence, and spread consternation through their abode of innocence and peace. Lazarus is sick. He whom Jesus loved is laid on a bed of languishing, and is racked with those same pains of bodily distemper to which all others are subject. Why is this, that evil makes no distinction in the imposition of its burdens, but bears alike on those who are the favourites of heaven, and on such as are shut out from all interest in its mercy? The reason of this it is easy to explain. This is not the season of judgment, but of discipline, and we must not therefore expect now what

is the appropriate dispensation of a future day. Evil is now a means of grace, baptized with the blood of Christ, and designed to subserve our moral and spiritual improvement. It will hereafter become retribution, and be measured out in exact proportion to the demerit of our character. It will then lose its prospective reference, and will stand in immediate and exclusive connexion with the deeds of our bygone history. Let us not confound these distinct and successive scenes of the divine administration, and so expect under one what is the peculiar allotment of the other. With this more enlarged view of the divine dispensations, there *can* no mystery attach to the announcement that Lazarus is sick. Lazarus is sick in body that the disorders of his soul may be remedied. The evils of the one are intended to cure the evils of the other. When the moral ailments have been removed, the physical will be no more needed, and they also will be withdrawn. But let evil perform its present mission, which is the work of *mercy*, ere we commission it to its other and its future, which is the work of *judgment*.

We may trace the beneficial consequences of this afflictive dispensation, even in its present influence on the two sisters of Lazarus—Martha and Mary. Can we doubt that all their sensibilities were called into most vigorous exercise in tending the sick-bed of their beloved brother, and were exerted in active ministrations in the alleviation or removal of his distress? Each would perform the part corresponding to her character, and to which her natural taste and dispo-

sition best adapted her. Martha would be the nurse, anticipating the wants of her brother, and stretching her invention in the discovery of the means of their supply. Whatever promised to mitigate his pains, or to afford him even a transient relief, would engage her earnest attention, and be put to the test of immediate experiment. She would meet his wishes in his looks, and gestures, and movements, and respond to them with those delicacies of prompt and minute attention which true kindness can alone suggest. This natural activity was the very element in which Martha breathed, and, when stimulated by the warmth of a most cordial sympathy, would never remit its labours, so long as it could be in the least degree serviceable to its object. Mary, on the other hand, would pour into the ear of her brother the expression of her sympathy. She would let him know that he did not suffer alone, and that she would gladly share with him a measure of his sickness. She would speak to him of Jesus, and of His power to heal. She would remind him that her prayer was ever ascending to a throne of grace in his behalf, and would press on him the duty and the motives of a devout and resigned acquiescence in the arrangements of his heavenly Father's will. While we compare these several offices of kindness, let us undervalue neither. The characters are distinct, and are marked by features the most dissimilar; but they are both of eminent use around a sick-bed. While we esteem the *nurse*, let us not despise the *minister*. We stand as much in need of the consolations of

the one, as of the more active kindness of the other. The heart must be soothed as well as the bodily wants attended to. We must have our Marys as well as our Marthas, when disease is tearing our frame with its malignant ravages, and when every remedy to which we can have recourse is all too little to sweeten the cup of our endurance.

In turning your attention, however, to the narrative before us, we aim at a more useful result than to lull you into a mood of sentimental tenderness, or to gratify your fancy with the warm and vivid colouring of a domestic picture. There is a most important fact here brought before us,—that trial is the portion of us all, and that the best of us have no reason to expect a complete exemption from its visitation. Sooner or later it enters every dwelling, and more or less embitters the cup of our felicity. The question, therefore, at once suggests itself, What is the conduct we should maintain under this pressure of the divine hand? What is the duty incumbent on us, and the result to which our desires and endeavours should be directed? We have already hinted at the design of God in these strokes of calamity, and ours should be the very same with His. Affliction is a means of grace as much as the other ordinances of divine appointment, and alike points to our spiritual improvement. God is then in intimate contact with our souls, and urging on us an increased interest in divine and spiritual things. He has recourse to the rod to chastise our waywardness, and to stir us up to a more earnest diligence in working out our own sal-

vation. He is seeking to correct what is amiss in us, and to carry us on to higher degrees of spiritual advancement. There is a voice in every such dispensation, and we should at once recognise it to be the voice of God. It is something even more solemn than His verbal utterance, and should come home to our hearts with a more awakening impression. God writes, *Vanity!* in His Word on all the glory of earthly prosperity; but when He writes it on the heart itself, it shews His determination to arrest our attention and to engage our sympathies. When He himself insinuates a drop of bitterness into the cup of our felicity, He brings our personal experience to the aid of His own declaration, and can we then resist the impression of it? In the one He addresses us in the small, still voice, but in the other these gentle accents are swelled to notes of thunder, and we should, therefore, be awed into breathless silence in listening to such an utterance. This is the meaning of affliction, through whatever channel it may reach us. It is God himself in our souls subduing them by His visitation, and calling us to repentance. He has taken them into His own hand, and is Himself teaching them lessons of heavenly wisdom. When God himself becomes our teacher, it is surely our duty to learn, and to open our whole hearts to His instructions.

Lazarus is sick! Let us advert, then, to one or two of those lessons, which this visitation should have impressed on the minds of this pious family:—

1. The first is the lesson of their dependence on

God. It should have brought them to a recognition of His sovereignty, and of His right of disposal of all which belonged to them. Health was His own blessing bestowed on them in the exercise of His gracious providence, but to which they could never establish a claim which would supersede His. If He chose to convey it to them for a season, this did not imply any alienation of it on His part, or a consent to surrender His interest in it as His own absolute property. Though we are permitted to taste the sweets of any mercy, this does not withdraw it from the hand of God, or exclude His title to resume it when it seems good to Him. This is a practical error to which we are all of us liable, to confound *possession* with *right*, and because God gives us the one, to imagine that He, at the same time, conveys to us the other. Hence, when any blessing is taken away, our hearts rise up in rebellious complaint, as if some injury had been done us, and we had been robbed of what we could claim as our own. Affliction is a means of breaking up this delusion, and of humbling us to a devout recognition of divine sovereignty. We are then disposed to acknowledge our dependence on God, and to bow with submission to His divine and righteous arrangements. We see that He has merely resumed what was ever His own, and that it is of the riches of His inexhaustible goodness alone that we have so long been permitted the enjoyment of the blessing of which we have now been deprived.

2. But a second lesson which this visitation should

have impressed on the minds of this pious family, was a consideration of the tenure on which all our blessings are held at the hand of God. They are given us to be improved to purposes of piety; and when they do not answer any such end, the tie which connects us to them may be rent asunder. They are intended to aggravate our sense of divine goodness, and to warm our hearts with emotions of sincere and fervent gratitude. Like Jacob's ladder, our soul should be carried upward by them to heaven, and they should constitute the bond of union, in our view, between it and earth. They should engage us to a closer walk with God, and should strengthen our confidence in the methods of His administration, however dark and mysterious the aspect they may wear. They should expand our heart with benevolent sympathies, and lead us to pour these out in liberal contributions to some of the many channels of Christian enterprise. These are the objects to which the gifts of divine munificence should be improved, and which alone encourage the expectation of their continuance with us. When we alienate them from this, their proper and intended use, we incur the forfeiture of them, and sooner or later they will be wrested from our grasp. Now, affliction should set us to the work of examination as to whether we have realised the condition on which divine benignity is exerted for our well-being, and which alone secures to us the prolonged and liberal exercise of it. If we are constrained to the conclusion that we have come short in this performance of our duty, or are chargeable with

an almost total neglect of it, we have no reason to complain when the providence of heaven acts with seeming severity towards us, and denudes us of blessings which we have abused. This was the condemnation pronounced on the slothful servant of the parable—"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents." Misimprovement of our talents is a virtual surrender of them; and not to extract from them the good contained in them, is, with our own hand, to subscribe the sentence which dooms us to the forfeiture of them.

3. But a third lesson which this dispensation should have impressed on the minds of this family, is one of Christian watchfulness. The severity of affliction traces its origin to the previous state of the heart. Our distress at the loss of our blessings must be proportioned to the regard we entertained for them, and to the complacency they had engaged. The higher we rise in our estimation of them, the more profound and embittered our regret when some adverse visitation of Providence snatches them from our embrace. This should, itself, tend to moderate our attachment, and to restrain it within such limits as will render it compatible with our well-being. But to this let us add the consideration that God is jealous of our hearts, and claims the supreme place in them as His rightful and inalienable prerogative. If we too much delight in other things, and expend on them the attachment which is due to Him alone, He resents it as an invasion on His peculiar sphere, and an insult on His

majesty. It is to reclaim to Himself our alienated affections, that He withdraws from us the object which had usurped them, and then we become alive to the insidious and stealthy advances it had made in our hearts. We see that we had given the world the best, when the worst had been accounted good enough for what is spiritual and divine. This shews us the reason of the trial which has been sent us, and should be improved to purposes of increased watchfulness for the time to come. We will guard in future, with greater diligence, the avenues of the heart, and will secure them against the deceitful approach of every attractive and ensnaring object. This is the very end which affliction is designed to serve, and when this purpose has been answered by it, it has brought forth in us the fruits of righteousness.

4. But we should also bear in mind, that though our hearts may be rent with some sore bereavement, we have not been touched in our most precious and valuable mercies. Though Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, yet Jesus ever remains the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We are not cut off from an interest in His love, or barred from the blessedness of His communion. We have still access to His presence, and all the comfort which this is fitted to minister. Lazarus is sick, but covenant blessings are as certain as before, and still enrich our lot with their surpassing and inestimable worth. The visitation is in love, and not in righteous displeasure. There is no wrath in the cup which has been given us to drink, but on the contrary, though

the potion may be bitter to the taste, it should become to us a token of divine favour. It has in view our restoration to spiritual health, and then the sensations of a temporary discomfort will be amply compensated in our enjoyment of a permanent and most substantial benefit. When we have God himself as a portion, we have enough, though we want everything besides. We will drink at this fountain with the greater avidity that the streams of created good are dried up. Oh, the sweetness there is in God, would we only endeavour to extract it! the plenitude of divine delights! the balm for every sorrow! the peace which passes all understanding, in reposing our head on the bosom of His love! the joy unspeakable and full of glory which, at times, fills the whole capacity of the soul! We dare not launch out into this ocean of fulness, or attempt to reveal to you all its mysterious and inexhaustible abundance. We will merely say, that with such a God as our portion, we may well, with Esau, reject the offer of even the richest worldly blessings, returning the answer which he did to his brother Jacob—"I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast to thyself." If affliction thus brings us to God, and admits us to a fuller enjoyment of the blessedness which is in Him, it has more than supplied to us even the heaviest loss, and brought with it a mighty accession of gain.

But let us now return to the sick-bed of Lazarus. Let us contemplate for a little the scene which is enacted there. We have pictured to ourselves Martha and Mary watching over it with all the interest of a most

devoted attachment, and with every sensibility strung to the utmost pitch of a most anxious solicitude. Hope and fear tremble in suspense in their agitated bosoms—at one moment shedding over the future a gleam of smiling sunshine; and at another, saddening it with dark and doleful anticipation. But the disease baffles all the resources of that skill and attention which are brought to bear on it, and advances with every symptom of increased strength to its consummation. The pulse beats with a more languid movement. Every inspiration intimates the difficulty with which it is attended. A pale and ghastly hue settles on the countenance. Nature, by degrees, languishes to its lowest ebb, and at length sinks in utter exhaustion. The spirit of Lazarus has stretched its wings and soared to the realms of immortality, leaving behind it a lump of inanimate clay, to be consigned to the gloomy recesses of the sepulchre.

But was nothing said at the moment of departure to ascertain to us his continued hold of the doctrines of his faith, and the light with which they irradiated the dark vale of dissolution? Did he make no mention of the hope which sustained his sinking heart, and nerved it with resolution to grapple with the throes of his last agony? Let us not inquire after this with too much solicitude. The evidence of our safety is inscribed in characters much more distinct and legible on the unswerving consistency of our living history, than on the capricious flow of sensibility which may seem to hallow and sweeten our death-bed. Give us the man

who, like Lazarus, walked with Jesus in close and tender fellowship during life, and we will not lay too much weight on the emotions which may mark the season of departure. Sometimes the spirit is borne away in a very ecstasy of believing expectation to the mansions of the blessed, the very countenance radiant with celestial brightness, and the tongue as if already vocal with the melodies of immortality. The love of Jesus fills the heart with all the ardour of an overwhelming affection, and labours for language elevated enough to reveal the seraphic fire which glows within. Sometimes the fulness of delight has so warmed and bewildered the imagination with its visions, that the departing Christian has thought himself to have already crossed the heavenly portals, and to have taken his seat amid the bright throng of immortality. But the more common experience, and not the less secure, is to have the mind composed into a calm and tranquil confidence, and a faith sweetly and devoutly resting on the Rock of Ages. No ardours of emotion elevate the soul, no language of awakened sensibility breathes from the lips. The sun sinks under the horizon without a cloud to obscure its lustre; and then does it rise in full orb'd glory on the scenes and manifestations of an eternal day. This, in all probability, was the case with Lazarus, though there are almost no materials before us on which to come to a decision. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

How sweet and tender is the language in which

Jesus announces this event to His disciples, having obtained the knowledge of it at a considerable distance with a glance of His omniscient eye—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth!" He softens the gloomy aspect of death by throwing over it the veil of a most calm and peaceful emblem, borrowed from our nature, when, worn out with the exhausting labours of the day, it seeks the renewal of its strength in the stillness of a temporary repose. He shuts out of view the process of corruption, which begins its progress on the corporeal frame whenever the immortal tenant has been dislodged from it, and the state of degradation and dishonour to which it is very soon reduced, amid the ruins and desolation of the grave. He limits attention to the withdrawal of the mind from the interest and variety of life, to the oblivion which absorbs the whole history of the past, and to the occupation of its powers with the new scenes and objects which have arisen on its view. In this insensibility to the warm and vivid realities around it, in which death and sleep alike sink the soul, there is resemblance enough to suggest the metaphor before us, though there were no other points of similitude between them. Certain it is, that it is a figure common to all languages, nor is death ever spoken of without an allusion to this emblematic representation of it.

But if death is a sleep, it is a sleep which will at length be disturbed. The sound of the last trumpet will echo through the chambers of the grave, and summon every inmate to the solemnities of judgment.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Jesus himself will knock at every grave, and arouse its slumbering tenants to the procedures of the grand assize. "And I saw," says John, "a great white throne, and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." It is the transactions of this great day which invest death with so solemn an importance, and which clothe it in terrors to which none are insensible, but which enthrall the minds of some in cruel and relentless bondage. In this view of it, it is no sleep to the wicked. The body may sleep, but the soul can never sleep. The man is still alive, and has gone to act his part on another and a wider theatre. All the deeds of his bygone history are renewed on the tablet of memory, and will haunt him with apparitions of guilt which will prove to him a constant source of disquietude and agitation. His conscience cannot sleep, since in another world it cannot have administered to it those opiates which here serve to lull it in such profound and fatal insensibility. But the believer sleeps in Jesus, and the whole current of his future consciousness will only serve to pour fresh sweets into his cup of heavenly blessing. Death does

not affect the relation in which he stands to Christ ; and even his scattered dust will at length be collected and organised into a frame which will enhance the blessedness of immortality. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them." "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

CHAPTER III.

MESSAGE TO JESUS.

TRUE THEORY OF PRAYER—GLORY OF GOD FIRST OBJECT OF IT—
DELAY IN ANSWERING IT—REASON OF THIS.

“Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.”—JOHN xi. 3-7.

A most important incident in the narrative before us is the message which the two sisters of Lazarus sent to Jesus to inform Him of his sickness. This was a virtual prayer to Him to compassionate their case, and to come to their relief. They did not think it enough to have recourse to ordinary means, and to commit the result to their instrumentality. They entertained too elevated an opinion of the character and claims of the Saviour, of the command which He exercised over every department of creation, and of the interest they had in His affections, to overlook Him in the various agencies to which they betook themselves, and which held out to them any prospect of deliverance. This

should minister a severe rebuke to us on many a similar occasion. We send to friends to tell them of the evil which has come on us; we are active in our employment of whatever means promise us the alleviation or removal of it; but we do not go to Jesus, and, with earnest importunity, supplicate His gracious aid. We forget that *His* blessing can alone crown with success even the most vigorous exertion of outward instrumentality, and that, if denied, every law of nature would at once be paralysed into utter impotency. And even if we are not chargeable with a total neglect of prayer, it has not its due place in our practical system. We discharge this duty in a cold and careless manner, rather to avert the remonstrances of conscience than from much expectation of the benefit resulting from it. But this was not the case with the sisters of Lazarus. Their chief dependence was placed on the interposition of the Saviour, and they invited this as what would at once restore their brother to health. We have no mention in this narrative of the care which, without doubt, they expended on other instrumentality. But it is expressly stated that they sent to Jesus, and that this was the message conveyed—"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick!"

It would serve to dissipate a host of misconceptions as to the nature and efficacy of prayer, would we but attend to the answer which our Saviour returned to the request of these two sisters. It was a temporal blessing they desired of Him, and our Saviour states to them the principle which must ever control His

procedure in the bestowment of such, and that is, a regard to the glory of God. This, indeed, is the very foundation on which the universe rests, nor would Lazarus at the present moment have been stretched on a bed of sickness had not the divine honour demanded it. Jesus loved Lazarus, but there was something He delighted in even more than the well-being of His friend, and that was the glory of His Father. It is not to be denied that this sometimes imposes a necessity for the denial to us of temporal good, and for the visitation on us of temporal evil. "This sickness," says our Saviour, "is for the glory of God;" and it would not be removed one instant sooner than was consistent with this great object. This, therefore, is a limit to the efficacy of prayer in regard to temporal blessings which can never be transgressed. The divine honour must *first* be provided for, and we are warranted to expect nothing in answer even to the most importunate and persevering entreaty which does not harmonise with this great end.

I am far from meaning to allege that there is any inconsistency between the glory of God and the best interests of man. The statement I have made has exclusive respect to his temporal interest, and it will not surely be denied that these are sometimes at variance with one another. "All things work together for good to the people of God." But evil is included in the number of these agencies, and the result points to their spiritual and everlasting well-being. Now, the knowledge of this tells us what to expect in our prayers for

temporal blessings. If for the glory of God, the blessing will be bestowed, and if not, it will be withheld. What could be more explicit as to this than the statement of our Saviour in the passage before us?—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This is a law of divine operation which is never departed from, and we must therefore bow to it with implicit submission. Nay! the more elevated our piety, and the more cordial our love to God, the more will we sympathise with that grand principle of the divine administration which subordinates all things to the advancement of His honour. In our prayers, then, let us acknowledge this, and let us beseech God to glorify Himself, whatever He thinks proper to determine in regard to our condition.

Did we know in regard to everything the relation in which it stood to the glory of God, it would be sinful in us to ask any temporal blessing, the bestowment of which we saw to be at variance with this. But we have no such knowledge; and therefore, we may supplicate for whatever is in itself lawful. "Be careful for nothing," says the apostle; "in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Here the injunction is universal, extending to all which concerns us, and encouraging us to commit it, without reserve, to the divine disposal. We are to carry it to a throne of grace, and there we are to leave the burden of whatever weighs us down. In the conviction that God

will arrange it in the way which will best subserve His own glory and our own ultimate well-being, we are to lay to rest all our anxieties, and to compose our minds to a devout and tranquil confidence. This is the true spirit of prayer, having regard at once to the divine honour and our own best interests, and acquiescing in whatever ordination will secure these.

The prayer of faith, we are told, ever meets with acceptance at the hand of God. But that faith must have an object, and must rest, therefore, on some divine revelation. Now that revelation is contained in the statement here made, that the grand principle which ever determines the divine procedures is the advancement of His own glory. We cannot, therefore, pray aright except our desires point to this as their primary object, and seek it above all else besides. But there is no revelation made to us that the bestowment of any temporal blessing will subserve the divine honour, or even our ultimate well-being. In this case, therefore, our prayer must ever be conditional, and must be limited by our regard to those higher objects. We must leave it to God to determine this, and must be prepared for a denial of our requests whenever this enters into the arrangements of His sovereignty. As respects spiritual blessings, these are ever conducive to the divine honour and our own well-being. They are therefore promised without reserve to our prayers. The pardon of our sins, the renewal of our nature, strength for the discharge of duty and triumph over the power of temptation—these are blessings which we are at liberty to

seek with all the ardour of our souls, and on which we may calculate with absolute and unhesitating certainty. But as to temporal blessings, we are ignorant of their bearing on the divine glory and our own best interests, and we must therefore leave it to God to determine whether or not they shall be bestowed or withheld.

And let us not imagine that in regard to temporal blessings importunity will prove an element of influence at a throne of grace. Our importunity must be prompted by a regard to God's glory and our own ultimate well-being, and not for the temporal good for which we supplicate. It should therefore prepare us for a denial of the blessing sought, rather than for the bestowment of it. The higher we rise in fervour, the more should we thus bow in submission. We must not expect by our urgency to dictate to God, but we rather express by it a more earnest desire that God would dictate to us. In giving loose to this ardour of soul, it should not be with a view to wrest the blessing out of the hand of God, but rather to bring us to an acquiescence in its being withheld. The greater earnestness with which we prefer our request, the more do we renounce our own and exalt the divine will. Importunity is thus the very spirit of prostration before God, surrendering ourselves wholly and entirely to His disposal, and resigning our desires to the decisions of His sovereignty. We make nothing of ourselves, and all of God, beseeching Him to consult His own glory and our well-being, and not the capricious and mistaken dictates of our own inclination.

It is a remarkable circumstance that Jesus did not at once respond to the call of these two sisters ; and even when the message was sent to Him that His friend Lazarus was sick, "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." It might have been expected that He would at once have hastened to his relief, and poured the balm of heavenly consolation into the bleeding hearts of his sorrowing sisters. But the truth is, that this very delay was their greatest comfort, and tended to awaken sentiments within them which would in no small degree allay and compose their disquietude. It brought their minds into closer contact with the love of the Saviour, and exerted the very same influence on them as that importunity in prayer to which we have been adverting. The delay of Jesus was to teach them this importunity, and to nurse in them the habit of waiting for Him with earnest expectation and desire. It is in this way that the Saviour often deals with His people, as if He took no notice of their requests, but turned away from them in cold and heedless apathy. His design, however, in this is to keep them waiting at a throne of grace, and to draw out their desires to increased warmth and sensibility. We have a very striking instance of this in the Syrophenician woman, whose daughter was possessed with a devil. She had heard of the fame of Jesus, and came to Him to beseech His gracious interposition in behalf of her unfortunate child. She urged her suit with imploring importunity, and with that vigorous and spirited appeal to His sympathies which awakened sensibility

can alone suggest. But Jesus answered her not a word. In no way discouraged, however, she continued to reiterate her request with still greater urgency ; and it was only after this severe trial of her faith that the Saviour complied with her desire. This is the influence which delay in answering our supplications should exert on our minds, to prompt to increased earnestness, and to steady our hold on the grace and compassion of the Saviour. We doubt not that it had this effect in the case of these two sisters ; and even in regard to Lazarus himself, we cannot say to what extent it may have been instrumental in pouring a sweet and softening radiance over the dark vale of dissolution.

It is obvious that had our Saviour acted from mere love to His friend Lazarus—a love which contemplated, merely His present well-being and sought his present advantage—He would have hastened at once to his relief, or at least by an immediate exertion of His omnipotent energy, would have nerved his frame with recovered health. But the point which this portion of the narrative brings out to our most prominent observation, and which I am most desirous to impress on your mind, is, that though Lazarus was the object of the Saviour's most tender regard, the glory of His Father was loved still more. It was this supreme desire for the divine honour which gave a direction to His conduct, and which imposed a restraint on the exercise of the mere natural attachment. Jesus would at once have restored Lazarus to health, but this would not have brought the largest measure of glory to God,

and therefore was he permitted to go down to the gloom and silence of the grave. Let us not, then, harbour the unbelieving thought, that when Jesus denies our requests or delays to answer them, the cause of this is to be sought for in His want of love to us. It is not because He has no interest even in our present welfare, but because He has a still greater regard to the glory of His Father. It is thus that the one affection suspends the exercise of the other when the gratification of both cannot be obtained, though it does not lead to its extinction. It is in this that we must seek the reason why our prayers for temporal blessings are ever denied. The glory of God and our own ultimate well-being, alike forbid a direct and literal answer to them. To reconcile us to this exercise of divine prerogative, we are kept waiting at a throne of grace, and are enjoined to urge our requests with importunity. Our love to God is thus brought into more vigorous action, and this leads to submission to the denial of whatever is inconsistent with His honour. This I believe to be the true theory of the divine dispensations, and what affords a most reasonable and satisfactory explanation of every part of our Saviour's conduct in the narrative before us.

I am sure the people of God have often realised this in their own experience, though the principle on which it rests may never have been an object of rational recognition. They have set their hearts on the attainment of some temporal blessing. They have carried their desires for it to the throne of grace.

They have persevered in their suit with unwearied importunity ; but, not obtaining what they sought, instead of being irritated to impatience, or soured into peevishness, they were humbled by degrees to an entire submission to the determination of divine sovereignty in its being withheld. Their prayers therefore, which at first might be very much the cry of nature, became at length the genuine expression of devout and hallowed feeling. The explanation of this is to be found in their more ardent and devoted love to God in proportion as their heart and understanding were brought to a more intimate converse with His character. The more their minds dwelt on the contemplation of His excellence, the more did they surrender to the impressions of it, till they were brought to the sincere and cordial desire that He might be glorified, even though it were to the injury of their temporal interest. It was the exercise of waiting upon God on which the whole of this gracious result was suspended. It was the delay in answering their prayers which converted their natural into a gracious importunity. Their original aspirations after their own interest were baptized in a more spiritual element, and passed into a zeal for the divine glory. So that prayer, from being at first debased in character by too large an admixture of a narrow and interested selfishness, was refined and sublimated into the purest and most hallowed emotion of a created nature.

Was this experience realised in the family of Bethany? I doubt not that it was. Not one of its

members would accuse the Saviour of a want of attachment or of indifference to their well-being. But they knew that He had a great work to prosecute, and that the glory of God was involved in it. They would connect with this His temporary absence, and the consideration of this would by degrees reconcile them to the severity of their domestic calamity. It is thus that the discipline of the Saviour draws the heart into a gradual communion of sentiment with Himself. The family at Bethany would at first seek their own things, but they would come at length to seek the things which are Jesus Christ's. They would at first desire His presence in the midst of them, as the means of sparing to them a beloved brother; but His delay would work in them a holy resignation, in consideration of the higher objects which occasioned it. They would still love themselves, but the glory of God would at length rank higher in their estimation than even their own personal interest. This was the very spirit of the Saviour himself, and to raise them to its sacred elevation was the grand design of His procedures towards them.

It is thus that the Saviour trains His people to a nearer sympathy with Himself in the sentiments which animate Him and determine His whole conduct. He teaches them to renounce their own selfish will, and to adopt the purer spirit which sends its inspiration through His own infinite bosom. He brings them to a throne of grace, and keeps them there till the pulse of piety beats with greater vigour in their souls, and

health is diffused to the remotest extremities of their spiritual system. The lowly shrub in the wilderness expands its blossoms to the rising sun, but the heat of a few days withers its branches and it sinks into decay. It is the towering and majestic tree which is cradled into strength amid the rude storms of winter, and which strikes its roots into the earth with a more tenacious grasp the more it is lashed with the severity of the tempest. Thus it is in the kingdom of the Lord. We see from the parable of the sower that there also there are slender shrubs—a slight and hasty vegetation, whose moisture is soon exhaled in the meridian sun, and leaves it to be scorched and consumed in its arid beams. But the seed which was sown in good ground took a stronger and more decided hold on that rich loam in which it was deposited, and sprung up through all the varieties of weather to which it was exposed to a mature and stately growth. Every Christian, in whose soul a work of grace has been carried on with a rapid and prosperous movement, has drunk deep of the cup of present calamity, and through some channel or other has had a large experience of distress. The hand of the Lord has been laid on them with a more or less heavy pressure, and the world has been in some way embittered to their taste. This has drawn them with sweet attraction to a throne of grace, and many of them can tell that it has been the same with them as with the family of Bethany in their present circumstances. Jesus has been manifested for their deliverance after a long and dreary season of

delay, not when their impatience expected Him, but when His own good time had arrived. They were thus taught a lesson of devout submission to the arrangements of His sovereignty, and "by the sadness of the countenance the heart was made better." The soul that shall "dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple," must be prepared for this by severities of gracious discipline to which others are strangers: "without will be fightings, within will be fears," and even at times a near approach to the gloom and bitterness of despair. But faith and hope are certain at length to come out with increased brightness from this sad and melancholy experience, and to lighten the remainder of their Christian course with a sweeter and more hallowed lustre. "They shall go from strength to strength, till every one of them appear in Zion before God." Their tears will then be turned into songs of thanksgiving, and all their Christian graces effloresce in the full bloom and loveliness of celestial day.

But let me again press on your attention the lesson which this message of the sisters to Jesus inculcates on us, as to the true spirit of prayer. If it is not learned here, it will be learned nowhere else. We are expressly told in this narrative that Jesus loved Lazarus, but there was a higher principle at work within Him, and which gave the direction to His conduct, and that was a regard to the glory of His Father. It must be the very same with us, if we expect our prayers to

meet with divine acceptance. We must have the very spirit which Jesus had. We may love ourselves and supplicate for whatever subserves our well-being even in the present state. But we must love God's glory more, and whatever we ask must be subordinate to this great object. Everything will be given to us in answer to prayer which is consistent with the glory of God; and nothing will be given, even to the most imploring earnestness of entreaty, which is at variance with it. We are not to attempt to serve two masters at a throne of grace, any more than in the current of our ordinary history. We are not to push self into the foreground and leave God behind us. Our hearts must be full of zeal for the divine honour, and we must seek the good of self merely in subordination and subserviency to this. This sympathy with the Saviour in the sentiments which actuate Him is the true spirit of acceptable prayer. God must rank first in our estimation, self second; and if we reverse this order, we have not the slightest ground to expect an answer to our prayers. If we make self the master instead of the servant, we may ask but we will not receive, because "we ask amiss that we may consume it upon our lusts." Our lusts are supreme, and not God, and that is a spirit He can never sanction with any token of approval. While, therefore, we send to Jesus to tell Him of our wants, let our first and greatest want be the advancement of the divine honour. This will bring all fulness to us at last, but it may not for the present. Lazarus was a martyr to God's glory and to his own spiritual

good for a brief season of his existence here, but the divine interests and his soon ran in the same everlasting channel. They are one now, they will be one for ever. Let us not send to Jesus for the temporal blessing alone, without taking into view the spiritual blessing which must ever go along with it. He is, no doubt, the Saviour of the body, but His eye ever rests on the glory of His Father, with which His whole work stands in immediate connexion. We should purify our vision to the same exalted contemplation, and while we think of ourselves, our aspirations should embrace the divine honour as the object of their chief solicitude. There is not a more important lesson than this in the practical system of the Christian, that the spirit of Christ himself, as now exhibited to us, must be ours if we would prefer to Heaven an acceptable prayer, looking first to the glory of God ere we make mention of our personal wants. Prayer has a mighty efficacy when this is kept in view. When lost sight of, it is the expression of worldliness, not of piety. It is man usurping the place of God, and claiming to be his own end. When man thus sits on the throne of God, prayer is impiety, and not the cry of devout and gracious desire.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS PURPOSES TO VISIT THE FAMILY OF BETHANY.

SHORTNESS OF LIFE—END OF LIFE TO GLOBIFY GOD—CHURCH INSTITUTE FOR THIS PURPOSE—LOVE IN THE HEART BEGETS LIGHT IN THE CONSCIENCE—CAUSE OF OUR MISTAKES AS TO DUTY—JESUS REBUKES HIS DISCIPLES FOR THEIR TIMIDITY — A COLD AND WORLDLY RELIGION TO BE GUARDED AGAINST—DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD ENFORCED.

"Then after that saith Jesus to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."—JOHN xi. 7-11.

WE are told at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, that in consequence of the hostile violence manifested by the Jews against our Saviour, and their repeated attempts to stone Him, He had taken the precaution of withdrawing to a distant part of the country, where He was sojourning when He received intelligence of the sickness of His friend Lazarus. After a delay of two days, He proposed to His disciples to return to Judea to visit the family of Bethany. It was very natural for them, however, to remind Him of the treat-

ment He before experienced at the hands of the Jews, and on this ground to warn Him against another exposure of His person to their malignant rage. The Saviour repelled their objections, and it is His reply to them which we intend now to make the subject of your meditations. "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." The meaning of this is not at all obvious, but on a careful examination of the statement we will see it to contain much important and salutary instruction. We have here, then, the duration of life, the end of life, and the rule of life. Let us shortly consider these in order.

1. First, then, we have the duration of life. Our Saviour denominates this "twelve hours," and within the compass of this brief season, the whole work allotted us must be completed. "The days of our years," says the Psalmist, "are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Our life is but short when measured on the high scale of eternity, and the inspired writers represent this to us under every similitude which can serve to deepen our impression of it. It is said to be as a shadow—to be swifter than a post, or than a weaver's shuttle—to be as an handbreadth, and as a flower which is soon cut down—to be as the grass which in the morning flourishes in rich luxuri-

ance, and in the evening is withered away—to be as the vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes for ever. These are some of the images employed to exhibit to us the transitory nature of human life, and to remind us how soon we must all of us lie down in the solitary gloom of the grave. And in the passage before us, our Saviour speaks of it as “twelve hours,” which, when they have run their swift and evanescent course, will measure the limits of our mortal existence. One of the most deceitful and successful wiles of Satan is to efface from our minds the recollection of this, and to throw an air of immovable stability over the frail and fading tabernacles of flesh which we inhabit. We are the dupes of this artifice when we settle down in them as permanent dwelling-places, and not as mere tents which we must soon strike as a preparation for removal. Oh! how many an imagination is blinded by this deceitful calculation, and how many a heart hardened by it into a total forgetfulness of God and the things of eternity! Time puts on the garb of an interminable duration, and the soul surrenders to the power of the delusion, seizing on the world with the very grasp of immortality, and promising to itself that it will never be relaxed. But soon the very strongest frame is bowed down under the weight of decrepitude, and the most obstinate worldliness awakes to the conviction that it must soon bid adieu to all to which it now clings with such fond and passionate attachment. The eleventh hour at length arrives, and that with a heavy burden of infirmities. The twelfth

soon succeeds it, and that, as our Saviour here declares, sounds the knell of our departure. "As the tree then falls, so must it lie." "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." But let us advert to the second point to which our Saviour here directs our attention.

2. The end of life. This He denominates "a day," but let it be observed that it is a day which we ourselves have to create. We have twelve hours to create it—an allotted period of time, short indeed in its duration, but still we are under a sacred and imperious obligation to devote it to the purpose for which it was bestowed. Our Saviour said of Himself, "I am the Light of the world!" and again, addressing His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world!" and He goes on to exhort them "to let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven." This day, therefore, is the result of that influence which the Gospel is intended to exercise over the character and the conduct of those who profess to have received it, and that influence itself is symbolised by the expressive representation of "light." It is, in short, the Gospel exerting its power and propagating its impressions through the medium of the Church, and in this way overspreading all with its divine illumination. This is the day to which our Saviour here adverts—the establishment of His own kingdom by His own labours and those of His Apostles, when the darkness of the world would give way before its rising glories, and when all would be bathed in its hallowed splendours.

Our Saviour's meaning, then, is, that life is given us to be devoted to Himself. We are to live His Gospel, and to diffuse its influence to the utmost of our power during its brief season. He himself came into the world to create day around Him, and the same sacred mission has been committed to us. We have but one work to perform, and everything which we call ours has been put into our hand to enable us to perform it aright. This supposes the world to be in darkness; and the reason why it is so is, because it is blind to the true character of God. It has lost the knowledge of the Creator, and is buried in the thickest shades of spiritual night. The lustre of divine excellence no longer shines on its view, and therefore its heart has wandered to other objects, in pursuit of that happiness which is alone to be found in the love and enjoyment of the Creator. This is the grand secret of its apostacy, that its undestanding is the subject of a melancholy blindness, and that its heart, therefore, is the seat of idols, which it has substituted for Him who made it. Wherever we turn our eyes we see night around us—the dense shades of spiritual darkness investing all in their deep and sombre gloom. But the Saviour has arisen, like another sun in the moral firmament, chasing before Him these clouds of death, and bathing all in the glories of a new and brighter day. He came to shew us the Father, to clear away the obscurity which had gathered around His character, and to present it to us in a light which would subdue the human heart to a love and imitation of it. He was the living incarnation of divine excellence,

and every step of His history was radiant with the manifestations of the invisible God. The glorious train of the divine perfections had come down to fill the temple of His humanity, and to dwell there as in a sacred shrine. His every word and movement gave some indication of their presence, and conveyed to us some lesson of heavenly wisdom. Truth was seated in His lips, and whatever He uttered was as an oracle speaking to us from the mysterious recesses of the infinite nature. Holiness was impressed on all His actions, and needed no more the abstract revelation of the law to exhibit to us its claims. His goodness was the very heart of God laid open to us, and bore the most emphatic testimony to the divine delight in our happiness. Well, therefore, might our Saviour say that He was the light of the world, since through the medium of His corporeal organs the divine character radiated on us its impressions, and brought to us a new and most striking revelation of its excellence and glory.

But this same work has been committed to the Church. The Saviour has now taken His departure from us, but He has organised a Church as His representative, and it must carry on the work which He himself began. We also are to be the lights of the world, shining with the lustre we have borrowed from the Saviour, and transmitting its beams on all around. He is the Greater Light, we are to be the lesser, and by their combined illumination "day" will at length arise on a benighted world. This is the very office to which

the Church has been consecrated, to exemplify the character of her absent Lord, and to hasten on the triumphs of His coming kingdom. In looking to the Church, the world is to see in it another Christ, animated with the same spirit which poured its inspiration into His gracious bosom, and prosecuting the same high walk of piety and benevolence with Himself. It is not to live to itself, but to Him; and wherever He led the way, it is to follow. The glory of God is to be the one object which engages its pursuit, and which is to subordinate to itself every power and talent which belong to it. This is the law of the divine kingdom, that the Church is to extend the Church; and it is only when it proves faithful to this important trust that we may expect to see the darkness of the world giving place to that day of spiritual illumination of which mention is here made.

Such, then, being the duration and the end of life, let us now advert, in the third place, to what our Saviour here says as to

3. The rule of life. What our Saviour here meant to state to His disciples was, that in seeking to prevent Him visiting Judea, they were actuated by personal considerations, and not by a regard to the divine honour. They were listening to the suggestions of fear and selfishness, and were not obedient to those higher and purer impulses of their renewed nature, which would have dictated another advice and conduct. Their hearts were not so devoted as they ought to have been to the work of introducing that day of

spiritual manifestation for which life itself was bestowed on them, or they would never once have hesitated to encounter all the threatened dangers of Judea. It was this want of decision of character, this not walking in the day, which made them "stumble" or mistake the will of their Master. A greater regard to the interests of the divine kingdom would have taught them otherwise, and better shewn them the way of duty. In short, He declares to them that their conscience was blinded by too earnest a concern for their personal safety, and therefore they were walking "in the night," and stumbled at the will of God.

Let us walk in the day-time, that is, let us be devoted to the glory of God, let us live for the interests of the divine kingdom, and our Saviour here declares we will not stumble or mistake the way of duty. Let us be disposed to do what is right, and we will see what is right. Let us respect the rule of obedience, and we will know it. Piety in the heart will maintain rectitude in the conscience, and what the one desires to do the other will discover. Let what is wrong cease to have an advocate in the passions, and no other department of our nature will lead us astray. Let the heart be right, and all will be right. Purity in the heart will be light in the understanding, and integrity in the conscience. When we do not state our interest against the rule of duty, we will never want the knowledge of it. It is the passions which impose on the conscience with their sophistry, and extort from it a mistaken judgment. The passions and conscience

cannot long be antagonist forces. They must coalesce in the impulse they communicate and carry us in the same direction. What is the object of supreme delight will sooner or later vindicate to itself the approving testimony, both of the understanding and the conscience. In a word, if we have the will to what is right, this, in God's good providence, will secure us against all mistake as to the way.

Our Saviour, then, here accuses His disciples of a want of devotedness to the interests of the divine kingdom. He would have them rise superior to the pleadings of their selfishness, and brave every danger to which they might be exposed from the persecuting violence of the world. He would have them avail themselves of that opening which the sickness of Lazarus afforded for their return to Judea, even though they had lately been driven out of it by the embittered enmity of an excited mob. There were but twelve hours given them to create spiritual day to the world, let them not lose one of them, but employ them all for the holy and gracious purpose for which they were bestowed. They were all too short for the grand object to be secured, but were any of them mispent, this was the same as to surrender it. Life itself would thus prove a failure, and instead of resulting in the advancement of the divine glory, it would turn out a blank in the great record of universal history. All this is implied in our Saviour's reply, and it contains in it, therefore, the nature of a severe rebuke to His disciples in the preference they gave to their own

safety over the interests of the divine kingdom and the advancement of the divine glory.

It will be observed that the claims of God and the claims of self are here opposed to one another. The claims of God would have carried the disciples into Judea—the claims of self resisted such a movement. Who will arbitrate between these competing claims, and settle the matter on a satisfactory foundation? Our Saviour says it is *a holy heart alone*. This is the most skilful of all casuists, and throws light on every perplexing question in moral or religious conduct. Let us go to the determination of such a question with a heart set on the discharge of duty, however arduous and self-denying it may be, and aspiring with earnest desires after the divine glory, and the rectitude of our judgment may be relied on. Purity in the heart will become light in the conscience. The *principle* of duty being in the one, the *rule* of it will soon be made evident in the perceptions of the other. The will being there, there will not long be ignorance of the way. Let the claims of God then be settled in the heart, and conscience will soon afford direction as to the conduct which they impose on us. That conduct may exact of us a sacrifice. It may be at variance with our present interest; it may thwart our prejudices; it may jar with our taste; still, we will be ready to surmount every such obstruction, and to enter on the course which promises most to meet and satisfy the divine claims. Let these claims be responded to in the devotedness of the inner man, and

they will put in abeyance every other in the conduct to which they prompt.

There is not a more common error in the world than to explain away the divine commandments, and to accommodate them to the dictates of our inclination, or the interests of our passions. Our Saviour here traces this error to its source. It is the want of purity in the heart which thus blinds the understanding, and imposes on the conscience. The love of sin robs us of the law, or reduces it to a mere dead letter. The heart impresses a bias on the other powers of the soul, and draws them in the same direction with itself. The supreme principle in the one becomes the rule of duty in the other. This is a delusion, against which it much becomes us to be on our guard. Our Saviour here warns us against it with emphatic earnestness. The remedy to the evil is to be sought in the rectitude of our inward disposition. Let our heart point in the right direction, and be devoted to the advancement of the divine honour, and we will never stumble in our interpretation of the law. No sophistical refinements will impose on the conscience, or prejudice its decisions. Its judgments will all bear on them the impress of moral truth, when the passions no longer rise in resistance to them.

Are there none of you who stand in need of warning in this particular? none whose affections are balanced between God and the world? who tread indeed the round of Christian duty, but who are not animated by the warmth of a sincere and vital piety—who have

no breathings after moral perfection—who go along with the world in many points where those of stricter principles and a more elevated devotion are constrained to separate from it—and whose religion is made to consist with much which wears at least a suspicious aspect, if it has not impressed on it a character of open and manifest evil? It is quite possible, in such a case, to lull the conscience asleep, and to put to silence its voice of warning and reproof. Let us have a care, however, lest we are not modifying the standard and softening the rigour of the divine law—bringing it down to a convenient accommodation to our own practice, and thus divesting it of some portion of its holiness. This is the delusion against which our Saviour here warns us, and it is one from which many will be awakened only by the thunders of a coming judgment. A cold and worldly religion—the decencies of a Christian profession without anything of the spirit of a warm and living piety—as the consequence of this, a timidity of heart, shrinking, as in the instance before us, from whatever threatens even the slightest persecution—a disposition to surrender to the power of example and the force of circumstances, instead of to bear up against them in dependence on the aid and providence of God,—these are evils which conscience will lay to the charge of many, and for which, more or less, we have all of us reason to humble ourselves before God. Let us at least acknowledge that they are evils in whatever measure they may exist in our character, and we will thus do homage to the purity of the divine law. And

here, then, is the question which we would press home on you. Are you desirous to make your escape from them? Are you reaching onward to a more elevated walk of piety? Are you aspiring after greater spirituality of mind—after a closer and more intimate fellowship with God—after a more thorough separation from the habits and practices of a world which lieth in wickedness—in a word, after that holiness of heart and life which the law of God requires, and which it seeks to transcribe into the character of every true disciple of the Saviour? This is the real test of our Christianity, this separation in desire from whatever is imperfect in us, and this ambition to be transformed into a complete resemblance to divine excellence.

We see, then, from this passage, that when our Lord proposed to His disciples to go into Judea, to visit the family of Bethany, He was met with the objection that they could expect nothing but a renewal of the same harsh and cruel treatment they had before experienced at the hands of their countrymen. Our Saviour, however, made this reply to the objection—“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” This is the very statement which the Psalmist makes when he says—“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.” Our Saviour meant thus to intimate to them that their selfishness had blinded their conscience, and that the inspiration of a warmer piety was

what alone would bring them to a clearer and better knowledge of their duty. This is a most important principle, which cannot be too strongly established in our minds. It derives all its weight from the progressive nature of sin, and from the tendency which it has, when it has once got a footing within us, to bring *the whole soul* in submission to its sway. Let vice be seated in the will, and it will soon make a conquest, both of the understanding and the conscience. It will bring both over to its own interest, and obtain from them a sanction to its unhallowed indulgence. Every power within us will become the advocates of the ruling passion, and conspire with it in giving a direction to our conduct. The mind cannot long remain in a state of insurrection—the heart drawing us one way, and the understanding and conscience another. To secure its peace there must be a harmony of impulse and movement between its several powers. Hence the certainty that one conquest of vice will introduce another, till the whole man has become the passive and prostrate victim of its might. We see, in the instance before us, how the selfishness of the disciples blinded them to their duty, and brought them to the conviction that they ought to decline a service which threatened their personal safety. Our Saviour, however, was of a contrary opinion, and that because His meat and His drink was to do the will of God, and to promote His glory. He was nerved with a courage which carried Him superior to every selfish and interested consideration. To have light in the conscience,

therefore, we must have purity in the heart, and the rectitude of the one is the alone security for that of the other. We must be devoted to the work of God if we would know aright His will, since an aversion or indifference to the one will sooner or later be visited by ignorance of the other.

In conclusion, let me say that the grand lesson which our Saviour here means to teach us is, the necessity of devotedness to God. This is the element of all true and vital religion. This secures alike a right state both of the understanding and the conscience. Where this exists, there cannot, at least, be any radical or soul-condemning error. This implies in it the habitual exercise of self-denial, since God and self are contraries, and we cannot provide for the interests of the one without, on many occasions, surrendering those of the other. The disciples, in the example before us, were called to such a surrender. This they were disposed to decline, had not the Saviour inspired them with a better spirit, and armed them with a more heroic resolution. The reason was their want of entire and unreserved devotedness to God. Oh, then, that the blessed spirit of all grace would impart to us this heavenly gift, and, by unveiling to us in larger measure, and in increased attraction, the glory and excellence of the divine character, would so subdue our heart with its impressions, that there would be no room in it for anything besides ! Then would there be a decided preference for God, and in this consists the true spirit of devotedness.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS VISITS THE FAMILY OF BETHANY.

THE MEETING OF THE FRIENDS—GRIEF OF MARTHA AND MARY DISTINGUISHED—FAITH OF THE TWO SISTERS—PROCESSION TO THE GRAVE—JESUS WEEPS—MEANING OF HIS TEARS—THE MIRACLE AND ITS CIRCUMSTANCES—GENERAL APPLICATION OF THESE.

"These things said Jesus : and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless, let us go unto him," &c.—JOHN xi. 11, &c.

OUR Saviour had proposed to His disciples to visit the family of Bethany, and mingle their tears with those of the disconsolate sisters. He had repelled their objections to this proposal, and virtually told them that they should look more to the glory of God, and less to their own personal interests. He thus procured their consent to the journey ; though, on the part of Thomas, rather a sullen acquiescence than a cordial and heartfelt willingness. They were now, however, acquainted with the fact that Lazarus was dead, and we cannot but admire the delicate tenderness of our Saviour's character in not announcing it to them at once, but

disclosing it in reserved and gradual detail. He first veils it under the garb of a pleasing metaphor, telling them that their friend Lazarus slept. Then, opening up the meaning of this figurative allusion, he declares to them, in plain and literal terms, that Lazarus was dead. The minds of the disciples were in this way reconciled to the proposal of the Saviour; and we must now, therefore, conceive of this little group leaving their present retreat, and undertaking a journey of not a few miles, to carry consolation into the bosom of a family whom they all regarded with sentiments of cordial endearment.

The remainder of this narrative divides itself into three portions—1. The meeting of the friends; 2. The procession to the grave; and 3. The miracle itself and its circumstances.

1. First, then, let us advert to the meeting of the friends. It was very natural that Martha should receive intelligence of the coming of the Saviour before it reached the ears of Mary. Martha was not the person to sink into dejection, or to be paralysed into inaction by the wound which rankled within. Her sanguine and energetic temperament would raise her above the deadening influence of her grief, and not allow it to prostrate her in utter imbecility. You would see her as much interested as ever in the domestic arrangements of the family, and looking after them with the same zealous solicitude. Some would imagine that she had experienced no bereavement whatever, or that she was insensible to its pressure. But there are times

when the burst of grief fills her whole heart, and breathes itself out in sighs of agony. She is restless till the Saviour arrives, and keeps a constant outlook for the slightest indication of His approach. Every form which rises into view in the distance, her imagination shapes into the outline of the Saviour's person, and her heart bounds with cheering anticipation. Mary, on the other hand, nurses her sorrow in solitude, and has no wish or inclination for the active business of the world. She has seated herself in the retirement of her closet, and there broods with constant dejection over the loss she has sustained. The very light of day is painful to her, and her only consolation is to withdraw to her brother's grave, and to bedew it with her tears. We see, in the narrative before us, the character of these two sisters impressing itself on their grief, and marking it with features of obvious distinctness.

At length the expected intelligence is conveyed to Martha that Jesus has arrived. In a moment she is in His presence, and her faith kindles into vigour and intensity as her eye rests on his well-known form. It is interesting to trace the immediate transition of her thoughts from evil to good, and to hear her declare that good alone was to be looked for where her Saviour was. She knew that His heart was full of benignity, and that He had resources at command which enabled Him to give unrestrained indulgence to this disposition in the communication of all needful blessing. "Lord," she exclaims, "if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." This is the first exercise of her faith. It is

retrospective. It looks to what is past, and acknowledges the ability of the Saviour to have prevented the event which had occurred. She sees in Him one superior to death itself, and who had power enough to turn aside the shaft which he was aiming at his victim. And when she recalled to mind the love He bore to the deceased, she could not doubt that that power would have been exerted for such a purpose. So far there was faith both in the supernatural might and gracious disposition of the Saviour. But that faith did not embrace His character in all its dignity and grandeur. Why must our Saviour be present in body ere His will can be carried into execution? Could not He transmit His influence to a region far removed beyond the reach of His corporeal organs, and there bring about results which accorded with His purposes? This limitation of our Saviour's agency shewed the faith of Martha to be still imperfect, and that the full glory of His person had not yet been discovered to its view.

There is here, however, a noble tribute to the character of the Saviour, and what should give additional vigour to our own faith. It was the heart of Martha which here spoke, and which gave expression to sentiments of endearment which had arisen in it as the result of intimate and habitual intercourse with the Saviour. His presence was significant to her of all that was good, and wherever He went, she acknowledges His mission was to bless all who came within the range of His benignity. "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." This was as much as to

say, that evil vanished at the approach of the Saviour, and that wherever He was there was life and happiness. What could she say more in commendation of her divine visitor? It is the very climax of human praise; and before she could have expressed herself as she here does, she must have witnessed in the Saviour traits of moral beauty, and a flow of benignant sensibility which appealed with strongest attraction to her love and admiration of all that was amiable and engaging in the human character.

But her faith next takes a prospective view. It looks before, but there she dares not indulge any settled or definite anticipation. She does not presume to ask the Saviour to reanimate the mouldering remains of her departed brother, and to restore him to the kindly embrace of his sorrowing relatives. This was an elevation of ambitious hope to which she scarcely ventures to aspire, and which she declines to shape into the form of a literal and expressed desire. Still it is obvious that she contemplated such an event as possible, and that she knew, at least, there was no obstacle in the way of it, connected with the limitation of the Saviour's power. This is all the length to which the delicacy of her faith permits her to go, and she thus casts herself without reserve, on the grace and advocacy of the Saviour. "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Even when the Saviour declared to her, in express terms, that her brother would rise again, she understood this statement in its application to the last

great day, and not to an immediate resurrection. All this shews that she was apprehensive of expecting too much from the Saviour, and that she was desirous of disciplining her mind to a due tone of moderation, in its calculation of the good she might receive. The reason was, she was looking at things in their relation to self, and not to the glory of God. Her humility shrunk from attaching too much importance to self, and this restrained her desire. But had she looked at things more in their relation to the divine honour, she would have seen that here there is no presumption, but that the largest measure of expectation expresses the most devout and fervent piety. She should have said at once, If the immediate resurrection of my brother brings glory to God, I know there is no presumption in expecting it, though there must be the greatest presumption in expecting such an event, considered as a mere private and personal interest !

But where is Mary all this time ? She is indulging her grief in solitude, and is still ignorant of the arrival of the Saviour. Martha, however, at length conveys to her an intimation of the circumstance, and summons her into the presence of their divine guest. She hastens to the outskirts of the village, where Jesus still was, and in the earnestness and fervour of her awakened faith throws herself at his feet. She greets Him with the same exclamation as her sister—“ Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” According to the custom of Eastern countries, a company were assembled in the house to mourn over

the departure of Lazarus, and they also attend Mary into the presence of the Saviour. And now the friends are all met together, ready for whatever movement the Saviour may suggest. The first interview has taken place, and what shall next be done? The Saviour determines this by asking where the remains of the deceased have been interred? And now, let us advert to the second topic which we proposed for consideration,—

2. The procession to the grave. Here the narrative opens on us with increased interest. The Saviour was no insensible spectator of what was taking place around Him. His whole heart was drawn out to liveliest sympathy with the sorrow of this distressed family, and He was even moved to the tenderness of tears. "Jesus wept" is the simple but emphatic announcement of the inspired historian, and he leaves it to ourselves to interpret these tears. There is little said here about the character of Lazarus, but the tears of the Saviour speak volumes in its favour. Who had ever such an epitaph written on his tomb as this, "JESUS WEPT?" A grave moistened with the tears of the Saviour bespeaks in loudest accents the character of the inmate who had his residence there. A voice from heaven could not have proclaimed it in terms of greater emphasis, or carried home with stronger impression to our minds the conviction of its piety and worth. But there is more in the tears of the Saviour than a mere tribute to the character of Lazarus. They are expressive of a tender and cordial sympathy with

the sisters in the loss of such a brother. They thus indicate, in a way the most decisive, His sentiments as to the happiness to be enjoyed in the sweets of domestic intercourse and the endearments of Christian fellowship. Had not His heart responded in sweet and sacred unison to the blessedness to be derived from the ties of near and intimate friendship, hallowed and cemented as they were in this case by the warmth of a devoted piety, He would never have bewailed their rupture with such profound and awakened sensibility. Here, then, is our Saviour telling us by His tears, where the largest measure of enjoyment is to be had, and where man partakes in richest abundance of that felicity of which his nature is susceptible. It is not in the palaces of the great, or amid the glitter of that magnificence which throws over them the charm and witchery of an actual enchantment. It is not in the march of a proud and restless ambition advancing to the high places of society, and seeking to subordinate all to its imperious sway. It is not in the gaze of the multitude, or in the incense of that adulation with which they are ever ready to regale the vanity of him who has courted with success their favour. No! it is in the bosom of a family like that of Bethany, characterised by a pious simplicity, the prey of no diseased or vicious excitement, sequestered from the tumult and agitation of the world, attached to each other by ties of Christian endearment, and living in the common enjoyment of a hope beyond death and the grave. This is the scene which has most attraction for the heart of

the Saviour, since it is most favourable to the happiness of man, and when a cloud is here drawn over it He bewails it in tears of tenderness. Let us read this moral, then, in the sympathies of the Saviour, and let us surrender to the impression of it. It should correct the waywardness of passion and check the impulses of ambition, under the conviction that a more subdued and hallowed tone of mind contains in it much more of true felicity than the gratification of these tumultuous and feverish desires.

We have no objection to give a wider latitude than this to the sympathies of the Saviour. We will not limit His view, on the present occasion, to the scene which lay immediately around Him. We are quite willing to extend it even to a wider range, and to suppose that it embraced other evils than those which had overtaken the family of Bethany. He may have contemplated sin as the direful cause of that death which had seized on Lazarus as its prey, and which had engulfed all the successive generations of mankind in its devouring vortex. He may have contrasted the smiling aspect of the original Paradise with the gloom and desolation which presented themselves in every department of observation. We cannot say to what extent our Saviour's tears owed their origin to this comprehensive estimate of things, since, though we are limited beings, He was not. But still we must not sink the particular in the general, or withdraw His sympathies from a direct and immediate interest in the bereavement which the family of Bethany had

sustained. If there was no such sorrow in His mind for *their* loss, the whole is a fictitious exhibition, and has not impressed on it the character of sober and literal truth. We will not thus tamper with the sympathies of the Saviour, or spread over them this illusive and deceitful colouring. We do homage to their reality, and while we believe they may to some extent have been prompted by a more comprehensive observation than our own, we must attach them in all their sensibility and tenderness to the picture of distress which is here presented to us.

But we cannot doubt that the sympathies of our Saviour looked before as well as behind. They contemplated the miracle which He was about to perform, and the healing balm which was thus to be poured into the wounds of this afflicted family. His tears were those of gladness, as well as of grief, in the view of renewing the kindly and gracious intercourse of those friends, which, for a time, had sustained an interruption. He saw the broken circle again complete, and the sweets of social endearment filling every bosom with a hallowed bliss. The fellow-travellers, on their way to Zion, had been parted for a season, but soon they were once more to be brought together and to encourage one another amid the trials and difficulties of the way. The lost one was to be found, and to draw to himself a more cordial and devoted attachment from the circumstance of his temporary absence. Who can doubt that this sweet picture of domestic bliss brightened the imagination and cheered the heart of the Saviour on

His way to the tomb of Lazarus, and that this was one source of the tears with which His path was bedewed? They are the overflowings of a benignant heart, luxuriating in the prospect which He was so soon to realise, and that in the exercise of the mediatorial dominion, to which it was to owe its origin. And it is indeed a grateful and animating thought, that our blessed Redeemer still retains all the warmth and tenderness of that sensibility which distinguished Him while on earth—that He still sympathises with our sorrows, and enters with the same lively interest into our joys—that His humanity is as complete as ever, and that He is touched with the same feeling of our infirmities which marked every step in the progress of His earthly history. There is no consideration more cheering to us than this, or more pregnant with the richest consolation in our dark and chequered passage through the wilderness.

3. This leads me to the third and last topic which was suggested for consideration—the miracle and its circumstances.

We have now accompanied this procession to the grave of Lazarus, and let us realise to ourselves in vivid conception the mournful group gathered around it. It is a cave hewn out in a rock, and having its mouth covered with a stone. Jesus commands the stone to be removed, that an entrance might be made into it. This was more than the heart of Martha could stand, to have the mouldering remains of her brother exposed to view, and she insinuates a gentle hint

that it were better to allow them to rest in the peaceful repose of the sepulchre. She reminds the Saviour that this was the fourth day from his interment, and that by this time the exhalations of putridity must sicken the atmosphere and diffuse a noisome effluvia around. Jesus rebukes her unbelief, and encourages her hope with the remark, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou couldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" This was a moment of sorest trial to the sisters. The very removal of the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre was itself calculated to thrill to their heart with an impression of agony, and to open anew every spring of tenderness within them. But what, they now ask themselves, could our Saviour mean by such a course of procedure? It could not be to agitate their bosom with pangs of increased bitterness, and to make it bleed with a more exquisite distress. No! they knew His character too well to entertain even for a moment any such idea of Him. Could it be that He was about to restore to them their lost brother, and to recall him from the slumbers of the dead? Never was a moment of more painful suspense than this to the two sisters, when the Saviour commanded the stone to be rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the foul and festering remains of their brother to be laid open to their view.

But where is the Saviour in this eventful moment? The attention of all must be directed to Him. The stone has been removed, and now the blessed Saviour puts Himself into the attitude of supplication, raises

His eyes to heaven, and gives utterance to this sweet address to His Father—"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me!" What a strength of confidence is here! To pray is to be heard! The act is identified with the answer, and the blessing descends, as it were, in the promise instead of the performance. **But** why should our Saviour pray at all? Can He not Himself command the result, instead of looking for it from the authoritative mandate of His Father? He himself states the reason of this—"And I knew that Thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me!" He seeks to be accredited as the messenger of Heaven, and therefore He invokes the presence of His Father in attestation of His claims. Every step in this wondrous procedure comes with additional excitement to the minds of those around, but especially must the two sisters have been waiting in breathless expectation the result. The matter has now come to a crisis, and the event of this strange encounter with death must be decided. Is Jesus Christ superior to the power of the last enemy, or is He mastered by this grim destroyer of all? This is the grand question at issue, and another moment will bring it to a decisive settlement.

All is now ready for the word of sovereign authority from the mouth of Jesus. The hopes of all are awakened, and the ghastly remains of the departed are stretched out in still and shrouded stateliness before them. The Saviour utters His voice of command,

and cries aloud in tones of majesty, which disturbed the very slumbers of the tomb, "Lazarus, come forth!" The summons is at once obeyed. The icy fetters of corruption are thrown off, and the dead man starts into the free and full exercise of his recovered powers. Here, then, is the weight of irresistible evidence that Jesus is indeed the messenger of heaven, and what authenticates every word to which He gave utterance as the true sayings of God. We bow in humble faith to this decisive testimony, and listen to the miracle, as it proclaims, in tones of emphatic energy—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" If this does not impress the seal of heaven on all which He declared, and constrain our submission to it as a true revelation from God, there is no means whatever of verifying a communication from above, or vindicating to it a sound and rational conviction on our part.

There is one point of view, however, in which we must present these details of the narrative before us, and that is as significant of the present and future history of the Church at large. We would pass from the private to the public, and from the occurrences of a particular family to the larger and more weighty interests of a wider circle. The attitude of Martha and Mary here, as waiting for the arrival of the Saviour, should be that of the Church in regard to His second advent. She must ever be on the outlook for the intimations of His approach, and ready to descry the first blush of His rising glories in the firmament above. She is not to faint because He postpones the season of

His manifestation, but is to wait at a throne of grace in more earnest and importunate supplication. This is His own injunction, and which He has enforced on our attention in the parable of the unjust judge. The widow which cried unto the judge is emblematic of the Church, and this was her prayer, "Right me on mine adversary!" That prayer was not at once answered, and hence the necessity for patient and believing expectation, such as was exemplified by the two sisters before us. We read, too, of the unbelief of those around the Saviour in His procession to the grave of Lazarus, and which extorted from His wounded spirit a groan of deepest agony. This is no less emblematic of the world at the season of the second advent, since the question is asked, in the conclusion of the parable to which we have adverted, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" But what Christ did on His arrival in the family of Bethany, He will perform on a larger scale in the retributions of the last great day. He will stand over every grave, and arouse its sleeping inmates to the awards of immortality. But especially will He say to every Lazarus, "Come forth!"—those whom He claims as His own, and whom He purchased with the price of His own precious blood. Not one of them shall be lost, but all of them shall hear His voice and live. We see all this realised in a miniature representation in the narrative before us. The history of this family of Bethany is the history of the Church at large, and the occurrences of the one are emblematic of the more weighty events of

the other. Let us now live in faith, both of the second advent, and of the resurrection which will succeed it. Let us wait in patience for the one, and triumph in the hope of the other. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

IMMORTALITY AN INSPIRING HOPE—CHRIST THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
OF HIS PEOPLE—CHRIST THE RESURRECTION—REASONABLENESS
OF THIS DOCTRINE—COMFORT OF IT.

“I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.”—JOHN xi. 25, 26.

THE circumstances in which our Saviour gave utterance to this declaration are amongst the most interesting and affecting in which He is exhibited to us in the record of His earthly history, nor can we conceive a heart so lost to all the generous sympathies of our nature, as not to be alive to their impression. It was to pour the balm of heavenly consolation into a spirit saddened and overwhelmed by the departure of a brother—an only brother—the object of the warmest and most affectionate regard, and who had till now been the protection of two pious and amiable sisters, but from whom, a few days before, he had been torn by the rough and unsparing hand of the last messenger. Jesus was at some distance from the place of Lazarus’ abode when the melancholy tidings were conveyed to Him that he was sick, but, entertaining for him a peculiar attachment, He speedily prepared Himself for a removal to

the scene of his residence. Lazarus, however, ere He arrived, had been committed to the grave, and all which seemed left for Him to do was to mingle His tears with those of his sad and disconsolate sisters. He promised to them, as some consolation to their sorrows, that he would rise again. "Jesus saith unto Martha, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." To this Jesus replied in the words before us, "I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

These are the words of comfort which our Saviour addressed to this pious but afflicted female under that severe and painful bereavement she had just sustained ; and though we have no immediate sorrows to soothe, and cannot, therefore, apply them to the purpose which they were originally designed to answer, they should go home to the heart of every child of God with the most attractive and subduing charm. Were our existence limited to a present world, and, after having spent a few days of labour and of trouble here, were we doomed to be wrapt in the darkness of everlasting oblivion, and to sink into that annihilation from which we originally sprung, some might have reason to deplore that they have been brought into being at all. But there is an immortality which awaits us hereafter, and our divine Redeemer has shed on it the glory and the brightness of an imperishable day. Even these

bodies of ours, after being stripped of all which now constitutes their beauty and attraction, and turned into an object of loathsomeness and horror, are destined to emerge again from the darkness and corruption of the tomb, and to flourish in unfading youth through the ages of an endless duration. There is something grand and ennobling in the idea of immortality ; nor can we think, almost without rapture, of having our existence stretched over the range of a boundless futurity, and, on a wider territory than we now occupy, being devoted for ever to the most worthy and dignified pursuits. This is the prospect which our divine Redeemer has opened up to us, and it will be realised in the experience of all who have embraced Him as their Saviour, and who are living in a willing submission to His law. Let our trials be severe and oppressive as they may—let us be labouring under a burden of heaviest adversity, and let our path be covered with the deepest and the thickest gloom—let us eat the bread of labour and of sorrow, and have but little to attach us to this ungenial and melancholy region : we can carry our view beyond all that is painful and distressing in our present abode, and solace our hearts with the glory and the blessedness of that immortality which lies beyond. Can our divine Redeemer have inspired these elevated hopes if they are to be buried with us in the grave ? Is there no other portion allotted us in the destiny of heaven, than to weep our little hour in this vale of sorrow, and then to pass away into everlasting forgetfulness ? Must we pronounce a verdict of

wilful deception on the animating exclamation—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die!" No! We are in a region of vanity and delusion altogether, if the blood of the Saviour has not sealed to these spirits of ours the promise of an immortal existence, so as to impress on it a character of absolute and undoubted certainty; and if we witness not at length His return to our earth, to disenthral these bodies from the fetters of the grave, and to raise them refined and perfected to the glories of an endless life. Let infidelity deride as she may the prospect which the Christian entertains—let the mere nominal Christian profess to entertain it, while he cares not whether it is realised or falsified—let the world treat it as a dream of superstition, and derive from it no influence on their character and deportment—it is a prospect which is dear to the heart of every true believer above all else besides, and which he will not renounce, whatever the force which may be brought to bear on him. It is a prospect which cheers and elevates his soul as he travels onwards in the journey of life, and which animates and brightens the hour of his departure. The words of the Saviour come with the charm of heaven to his ear—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die!" These words may be considered as a promise made by our Saviour to believers, and a declaration of His ability

and purpose to provide for its fulfilment. And we remark, then—

1. That He promises to them the permanency of their spiritual life.

It is implied in this statement of our Saviour that His people are all destined to submit to the stroke of death—that they must become the subjects of a change which will disengage the soul from the body, and which, for a season, at least, will leave the latter without its old and intimate companion. But this, He declares, does not affect that principle of spiritual life which has been implanted in the soul, and which will still continue to animate it, even in its state of distinct and separate existence. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead”—dead in the simple and natural meaning of the term—“yet shall he live;” and whosoever liveth, or has in him a principle of spiritual life, shall never lose it, or “shall never die.” The meaning of the passage is plain and obvious, nor can any one doubt, that it contains a promise to believers of the permanency of that principle of spiritual life, which has been implanted within them, amid that great revolution which death produces in their outward and physical system.

Amid the number and variety of those figurative descriptions which are given in Scripture of the change which takes place in regeneration, it is represented as a resurrection from the dead; and that sacred character which is then impressed on the desires and affections of the inner man, is spoken of as the implantation,

of a principle of spiritual life in the soul. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, exhibited it to them in such a light. "And you hath he quickened," says he, "who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." And in the Epistle to the Colossians, the same apostle says—"If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." There is an obvious propriety in this metaphorical description of the work of regeneration. At the same time, while, on the one hand, we must beware of stripping the metaphor of all its significance, to adapt it to the flattering views we may entertain of human nature, we must be as careful, on the other, not to strain it to an absurd and unreasonable extreme. When the vital principle is extinguished within us, the exercise of every corporeal function is wholly suspended; but the absence of spiritual life in the soul, does not lay the weight of any such interdict upon its energies, as to reduce them to a state of total inactivity. On the contrary, the mechanism of inward feeling sustains no interruption in its movements, though these are marked with another character altogether, when they are brought under the direction and control of Christian principle. The soul is still capable of thought and

sensation, even when dead in trespasses and sins ; but when animated and quickened with spiritual life, a new direction is impressed on the exercise of all its faculties, and they are employed about objects to whose power they were before insensible. The innate depravity and corruption of the human heart, and the strength of ungodly habits contracted by repeated acts of sinful indulgence, are what ruin and destroy the soul, and bring it under the dominion of spiritual death. Its life, in the true and proper import of the term, does not consist in its mere capacity of action, or in its possession of a vital and inherent energy, but in that union to its Maker which is implied in being reconciled and brought near by the blood of the Cross, and of which a principle of divine love is the bond and ligament in the heart of man. This is the spring of all which is worthy of the name of happiness, and without this we must be doomed through eternity to sink under a burden of intolerable misery, and must be abandoned to that desolation and despair which are represented in Scripture as the death of the soul. If we live in a state of enmity with God, and do not draw from Him that spiritual nutriment which must sustain the vital principle within us, we are still dead in trespasses and sins. We have no susceptibility of holy enjoyment, and no capacity of holy action ; and as we have spent our days without God in the world, we must be cast out for ever from His presence hereafter, and become the prey of " the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched."

Now, to those in whose soul this principle of spiritual life has been implanted, our Saviour here promises that it will never be extinguished. They must, indeed, be visited with the stroke of mortality, and be consigned for a season to the gloom and silence of the grave, but "he that believeth in Christ, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth, and believeth in Christ, shall never die." It is most comforting to know, in a world where we are beset with enemies so numerous and so powerful, and where we have temptations to encounter of such magnitude and strength, that we have this promise of our divine Redeemer on which to repose, as a pledge of our ultimate safety—that, having been made alive to our need of Christ as a Saviour, and having closed with the proposals of His mercy, we can never be withdrawn beyond the reach of His superintendence and His care—and that He thus provides for the fulfilment of what He declared to be the certain and unchangeable ordination of Heaven, when He said—"This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." We may, indeed, be scarcely able at times to detect the symptoms of spiritual life in the soul—the lineaments of the new creature may be impressed on it in such dim and languid characters as almost wholly to escape our view—we may have reason to bewail the power of remaining corruption, and there may be little within us to inspire us with comfort or to encourage our hope—but we have the promise of our

divine Redeemer on which to lay hold, and if our hearts have ever kindled with the warmth of holy affection, or if our sincere and earnest desire is towards that moral excellence which is acceptable in the divine regard, that promise will be realised to us in its utmost meaning and extent. Our spiritual safety is secure, amid all the varieties of our inward experience, and all the dangers to which we are exposed in a world so full of strong and urgent temptation. We may repose with confidence under the shelter of divine protection, knowing that, as we have principles and susceptibilities within us which faith alone can produce, "he that believeth in Christ, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and that he that liveth, and believeth in Christ, shall never die." But we remark—

2. That our Saviour here promises to His people their future resurrection from the grave.

This is a doctrine which everywhere pervades the volume of inspiration, nor is it possible to express it in language more simple and explicit than it is there set forth to us. We are distinctly told that our bodies are to be hereafter restored from the dominion of the grave, and that, having again become the abode of that spiritual and immortal principle which for a time had been dislodged from them, they are to share alike the benefits of that redemption which Christ has wrought out for us, and to mingle in the services of the sanctuary above. The truth of this doctrine is connected with the justice of the divine character, and with the elements of our present being as now in a state of preparation

for the awards and retributions of eternity. Our constitution is made up of two great departments, our mental and our corporeal. Both of them are subject to the divine government, and the proper objects of moral blame and approbation ; and as, therefore, they are concerned alike in man's probation, it is reasonable they should share in that destiny which will hereafter be allotted him. We could not rest with a feeling of complete satisfaction in the determinations of the judgment-seat, if these were to embrace merely one element of our being, when another had conspired in the performance of those actions on which a verdict is there to be pronounced. It would be a violence done to our ideas of justice, and would throw suspicion on the moral perfection of the divine character, to exclude either our body or our soul from the examination to which we will hereafter be subjected at the tribunal of heaven, and to assign to one of them merely a portion to which the other has an equal claim. The doctrine of a future resurrection thus bears an unequivocal impress of moral consistency, and comes to us recommended by its obvious agreement with our views of fitness and propriety. No partiality is to be shewn in that sentence which will hereafter be passed on us ; but as body and soul were united in the doing of that good or evil which was here done, both will share alike in the retribution of eternity.

But the doctrine of the resurrection is not only thus just, and reasonable, and necessary—it is a doctrine on which we must dwell with peculiar delight and satis-

faction. The body is not regarded by us as an encumbrance to the soul, which we are desirous to throw off, and from which we would be glad to make our escape. Our spirits have no such relish for what is abstract and immaterial, as to have the sense of being fettered and imprisoned in that tenement, in which they are at present lodged, and to be waiting with impatience the moment, which is to liberate them from so irksome a confinement, and to send them forth with emancipated energies on some ethereal and spiritual region. No! the body is an abode in which the soul delights to dwell, and it is always torn from it with cruel pain and reluctance. The union between them is close and intimate, and the dissolution of it gives a shock to the system which it is averse to contemplate, and which it is still more averse to endure. There are beings amongst the ranks of intelligence, whose constitution is not made up of any such compound of body and of spirit as characterises ours, and who have no corporeal covering at all to bear about with them.* But this to man is an unnatural state, nor has he the impression of his system being perfect and entire, unless it embraces in it that body to which he cleaves with fondest endearment, and which he is most unwilling to throw off. It is, then, most agreeable for him to know, that, though he must abandon for a season this chosen and much-loved abode, and though it must crumble in the grave into that dust from which it was taken, its disjointed parts will hereafter be reassembled, and the ancient fabric reared

* It is a *gross* body which is here meant.

anew, and that, purified from every element of corruption and decay, and invested with every quality which can contribute to its vigour, and beauty, and permanence, it will again become the habitation of the spirit, and be devoted through eternity to the service of Him who made it. There is an intimacy produced between the body and the soul, as the result of that constant intercourse which is now maintained, and that strong and powerful tie which connects them with each other; and it is delightful to know that this intimacy will again be resumed, as our Saviour has given us reason to expect, when He declares, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die!"

It is true, indeed, as it is now constituted, our body is subject to much weakness and imperfection, and, in its present state, would be an unseemly and burdensome companion for our improved and glorified spirit. It is the seat of low and grovelling appetites, which debase its dignity, and which impair the purity and freedom of the mind. It is liable to the inroad of disease, which enfeebles its strength, and dooms it to the endurance of much severe and painful suffering. It often proves to us the occasion of sin, and becomes the instrument of rebellion against God. Nor is it marked with a character of stability and permanence. Its energy is consumed and wasted by the lapse of time—its powers are blunted, and, at length, almost wholly die away—the beauty, which once enriched and en-

livened its features, gives place to the deformed and withered aspect of advanced age—and, unless it become the prey of accident or of fatal disease, ere it has reached the term of human life it bends under the weight of decrepitude, and sinks into total imbecility. But when the Saviour shall raise it from the grave, none of this imperfection shall adhere to it. It will be free from every tendency to decay, nor will death have any more dominion over it. Its powers will be enlarged and perfected, and adapted to those noble and dignified employments in which it will be engaged. It will be adorned with a beauty and invested with a splendour, which will eclipse the grace and glory of everything here below. It will no more be carnal in its affections and susceptibilities and desires, but will be refined and spiritualised, so as to render it meet for that region of purity and sacredness, in which it has taken up its everlasting and unchangeable abode. Having become the subject of so great and important a transformation, and endowed with attributes and qualities so superior to those which now distinguish it, it will be a tenement altogether worthy of the immortal spirit, and will be instrumental in carrying it onward to that summit of divine perfection, which it is destined to reach in the ages of eternity.

But to estimate the full amount of what the Saviour will effect even for our corporeal system, and to perceive the contrast, in its whole extent, between the present condition of the body, and that state of elevation and dignity to which it will hereafter be advanced, we

must contemplate it, not merely in that decay to which it is reduced, when age or disease has sapped its energy, we must extend our view to those still greater ravages which are committed on it, when shut up in the prison-house of the grave. It then rots and putrifies till every trace of its original character is worn out, and it loses even the aspect of humanity. Its flesh is consumed from off its bones, and the worms of the earth make it their unresisted prey. A few withered and disjointed fragments, are all which remain of that goodly fabric, which was once fashioned into so exquisite a structure, and sustained in the exercise of its powers by so nice and delicate a machinery. Its substance has passed into the constitution of other bodies, or has been scattered by the winds of heaven, or lies undistinguished amid the earth in which it was laid. And yet when our Saviour comes, He will gather up those broken and wasted materials. He will adjust them into their original shape and conformation. He will adorn them with heavenly beauty; and, having recalled to this structure, which He has reared, that living principle which for a time had been withdrawn from it, He will send it forth upon the fields of Paradise to enter on the services of immortality.

We have no disposition to grapple with those difficulties with which this subject is beset, or to meet those objections which scepticism has urged against the possibility of a future resurrection. It is easy to perplex the understanding with these, nor may we be able to refute every cavil which may be advanced on this topic.

Our faith in the doctrine, however, does not stand in the wisdom of man but in the testimony of God. There is no necessity to suppose, that the body with which the immortal spirit will hereafter be clothed, is to be the same which we now wear, as to every element and atom which enters into its constitution. We satisfy ourselves with saying on this point what has been said before us, that "it will be the same body which had lived and died, and was buried, as to everything essential to the feelings and the aspect of personal identity." If this be conceded, it is of little consequence what alteration is effected in the simple and component parts of the structure, or what changes it undergoes, in order to prepare it for the exalted employments in which it is to be engaged. It should be sufficient, however, to remove every doubt which may be suggested on this subject, to consider the power by which this great event is to be brought about. It is the power of Him who has only to speak the word and it is done—who organised the body into its present conformation, and breathed into it that living principle by which it is animated; and who can, therefore, resuscitate it when it has mouldered into dust, and impress on it the very same lineaments by which it is now characterised. Let the achievement be difficult beyond what it is possible for us to conceive, we will bear in mind, that it is the achievement of Omnipotence, and we will rest with undoubted certainty on the faithfulness of God, which is pledged to raise our body from the tomb, and to "fashion it like unto the glorious body" of the Saviour.

We will not allow the cavils of scepticism and infidelity to rob us of the comfort of the declaration before us, but we will build on it the hope which it encourages us to entertain, when Christ himself announces that "He is the resurrection and the life," and tells us again, that "He will raise us up at the last day." But we remark—

3. That Christ here declares to His people, that He himself is the source whence these blessings are to be derived to them.

It is from Him that their spiritual life is derived, and it is by His divine agency that it is maintained within them. They must all have sunk for ever into the pit of destruction, and must have perished under the weight of God's holy indignation, unless He had interposed for their deliverance, and provided for their restoration to divine favour and fellowship. It is in virtue of what He has done and suffered on their behalf, that the influences of a divine Spirit are put forth upon their soul, to apply to them the blessings of that redemption which He died to procure, and to prepare them for the exercises and enjoyments of the heavenly world. It is on their union to Christ, by the bond of faith, that a principle of spiritual life is implanted within them, and it is by their continuing to abide in Him, that this principle is nourished and sustained, till it issues in the glorious results of immortality. Whatever worth or excellence belongs to us—whatever change has been produced on our character, and whatever hope of good we cherish in looking to the future, all must be traced, either directly or indirectly, to Christ; to Him we are indebted for it all,

and to Him, therefore, we should ascribe all the glory and the praise.

But the redemption which Christ has wrought out for His people, embraces not merely the well-being of their souls. He claims their bodies also as His purchased possession, and He will at length raise them to the rewards of immortality. This is one of the blessings of that covenant whose conditions He has fully and completely fulfilled, and which are secured on a ground the most certain and immovable to all, who have been brought to a sincere and cordial acquiescence in the proposals of His mercy. It entered into the purposes of divine love, not merely to put their spirits in possession of that blessedness which is prepared for them, but to emancipate their bodies from the thralldom of the grave, and to render them joint partakers of that portion which will hereafter be allotted them. To Christ, then, we are indebted for this latter privilege as well as for the former—not that we would have been for ever shut up in the captivity of the grave had He not satisfied in our stead the claims of divine justice—but by His death, He has established for us a title to a “resurrection to *life*,” and has provided that our bodies should be taken into fellowship with our souls, in the enjoyment of the blessedness which awaits us in the heavenly world.

But Christ may also be termed the “Resurrection,” inasmuch as His resurrection is a pledge and earnest to His people of their own. It is in this sense that He is called “the first fruits of them that sleep,”—“But

now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." In this passage the resurrection of the Saviour is not only directly asserted ; but we are told the specific character in which He has risen, as standing in a certain relation to His people, who are still lying in the grave. The Jewish harvest in general was accepted and blessed by the offering and acceptance by God of the first fruits. So, in the resurrection of the Saviour, is there a pledge given to those who are dead in Him, that they shall in like manner be disenthralled from the fetters of the tomb, and shall be raised to life and immortality. The whole lump was made holy by the consecration of the first fruits. "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy." So are the whole body of Christ, all who are united to Him by faith, ascertained by His resurrection of the certainty of their own. They are one with Him in the divine regard, and as death could not maintain a permanent dominion over Him, neither will it be able to retain them in everlasting and unchangeable captivity.

It is not enough, then, that you acknowledge Christ as the Saviour of your soul. You must also acknowledge Him as the Saviour of your body. Ever bear in mind that your bodies have been redeemed by His precious and peace-speaking blood, and let this be present to your mind, when you present to Him the tribute of your gratitude and praise. It is a full and complete salvation which He has wrought out for you, and if your spirits are to be conducted to the man-

sions of glory and of blessedness hereafter, it is in as close and intimate union with your bodies as they now are, and invested with every quality which can contribute to their grace and dignity and perfection. When you reach the termination of your earthly career, and the bond which connects your soul and body is to be cut asunder, your "flesh will rest in hope." You can anticipate, in virtue of the promise of the Saviour, its future resurrection from the grave, and your faith will realise a comfort of which you cannot now form any adequate conception in the declaration before us—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAMILY OF BETHANY AT SIMON'S FEAST.

THE COMPANY SURVEYED—COVETOUSNESS OF JUDAS—CONDEMNED
BY OUR SAVIOUR—LESSON TO BE LEARNED AT THIS FEAST—JUDAS
AND MARY CONTRASTED—JUDASES OF THE PRESENT DAY—HIS
CHARACTER A BEACON TO ALL.

"Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."—JOHN xii. 1-8.

THE village of Bethany was a busy scene when the intelligence spread that the Saviour had arrived in it. It was soon crowded with an anxious multitude drawn thither by motives of curiosity to see a person of such celebrity as Jesus now was, and also Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. The Saviour, however, had accepted an invitation to a feast, and we must

take a view of the company by whom He is surrounded.

Who is this seated at the head of the table—the GOODMAN of the house, and who is honoured with the presence of so distinguished a guest? His name is Simon, and he has been a leper. In all probability he has been cured by the Saviour of his loathsome disease, and he invites Him to this entertainment as a small expression of his gratitude.

But who is this that ministers to the guests with such active and zealous solicitude? Her whole heart seems to be in the work, and instead of performing it in the cold and mercenary spirit of a hireling, her very countenance is radiant with a smile of satisfaction. This is Martha!—and as it is not in her own house she serves, she must have solicited the employment as an honour done to her. She considers it a mark of highest distinction to wait on the Saviour, and to provide for His necessities. He had restored to her a beloved brother from the shades of the sepulchre, and whatever service she can render to Him, she is conscious comes much short of that warmth and devotedness of acknowledgment which are His due. This was the proper sphere of Martha, but it is not always the case that *taste* and *duty* are at one, as in the example before us. Activity was her natural element, but while her love of this was gratified, her love of her Saviour was still more. She delighted in the exercise of her bodily powers, but this sentiment was greatly enhanced in sensibility and vigour, when she was honoured to con-

tribute to the supply of her Saviour's wants. Where taste is sacrificed to duty, it cannot be denied that this is a stronger evidence of principle having the ascendancy within us, than when it is gratified ; but still it is cause of gratitude, where no such sacrifice is demanded of us. It will, however, be the resolute determination of every pious man, to follow in the path where duty leads, whether this be agreeable or not to his instinctive and constitutional propensities.

But who is this young man of mild and placid demeanour, and whose countenance is so sweetly expressive of a heart warmed with kindly and benevolent sympathies ? He seems to look to his Saviour with peculiar complacency, and to be insensible to all else but the attraction of His presence. This is Lazarus himself!—not a spirit from the realms of the departed gliding past in shadowy apparition, and vanishing anon into thin air—but *a real and veritable person*, with all the palpable and substantial attributes of humanity. No one else has ever crossed the bourn which separates time from eternity, and returned to mingle anew in the interest and variety of life. But you once listened to the message which announced to the Saviour that he was sick. You saw him sink in the embrace of death amid the tears of sorrowing sisters. You followed his remains as they were carried to their last resting-place. You left him in the gloom of the sepulchre, wrapt in his shroud, and with a stone to shut him in. You heard the voice which proclaimed, “Lazarus, come forth!” and in a moment the

dead man obeyed the summons, and rose in the bloom and freshness of recovered health. And here he now sits with his divine Deliverer, partaking of the viands which cover the table, and enjoying the sweets of its convivial intercourse. He is a *VOLUME of evidence* of the divinity of the Saviour's claims, and what may well supersede all other testimony. God himself has written on his person with His own hand, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased!" No wonder that the Sanhedrim was desirous to put him also to death, "because that by reason of him," as we are here told, "many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." An appeal to the sword was the only reply they could give to the argument; and what they could not accomplish by *right*, they resolved to bring about by *might*.

But there is still another character among the guests at this entertainment, whose expression of cordial and devoted attachment to the Saviour, well merits our consideration and regard. The heart of Mary was cast in too delicate a mould, not to be susceptible to emotions of warmest gratitude to Him, who had restored to her a beloved brother from the gloom of the sepulchre, and she was desirous to embody these in some outward and substantial acknowledgment. She considered the present a favourable opportunity of doing so, and this is the course she resolves to pursue. She has in her possession a pound of ointment of spikenard, of a very costly kind, contained in a no less valuable box of alabaster, and this she determines to pour out as a libation to the supernatural dignity and sympathising

kindness of her friend and benefactor. She therefore rises up in the midst of the company, and suffuses the head of the Saviour with this rich and fragrant preparation. And, not satisfied with this, she even bathes His feet with the odoriferous oil, and wipes them with the hair of her head. All this was intended as an expression of devout and affectionate obeisance to the Saviour, and to relieve her labouring heart of the emotions with which it was burdened. The service was alike honourable to herself and to her Master. It shewed a heart attuned to the experience of kindly and gracious emotion, and ready to give expression to this in deeds of self-denying generosity. And it no less shewed her high estimation of the character of the Saviour, and her conviction, that even the humblest and most cordial tribute of acknowledgment, came much short of the manifested worth and glory of its Object.

But who is this that scowls on the deed with an aspect of such stern displeasure—who has so little sympathy with those tender and delicate emotions which warm the heart of Mary, and to which she must give some outward and suitable expression? This is Judas!—who was soon to betray his Master, and who now grudges to Him this tribute of grateful acknowledgment. He condemns the waste of so precious an ointment, and calculates the advantage it would have brought to the poor, had it been converted into capital and turned to their account. “Why,” says he, “was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and

given to the poor?" All very well, had there been *sincerity* in the remark; but it was a mere cover to criminal intentions. Judas was the treasurer of the Apostolic College, and carried the bag. He was desirous to have it well replenished, that he might exercise his furtive propensities with the greater liberty, and with a better chance of escaping detection. This was the secret motive which elicited his observation, and it was mere dishonesty, therefore, seeking a cover to its baseness, under the specious disguise of benevolence. But even though the remark had been sincere, is benevolence the *only* sentiment within us? Is no allowance to be made for that modification of it denominated *gratitude*? Is no portion of our goods to be set apart to express our interest in the welfare of our benefactor, but is all to be absorbed in the imperious claims of charity? This is not the native and spontaneous impulse of the human heart, but is the constrained determination given to its sensibilities, by the cravings of an insatiable selfishness. We have a duty to perform to our benefactor, as well as to the poor, and if that benefactor be the Saviour himself, that duty should come home to us with a tenfold weight of obligation. The claims of the one are quite consistent with those of the other, and our liberality to the destitute, therefore, can never plead our excuse for our neglect of our benefactor.

Our Saviour himself turns the advocate of Mary on this occasion, and advances to her defence. "The poor," says He, "ye have always with you, but me ye

have not always." It was an opportunity which would soon be lost, were it not improved at the present time, but the objects of charity were ever *at hand*. This is the plea which the Saviour urges in excuse for Mary's deed, and we cannot but admit its validity. There is a time for everything, and let not one duty, therefore, jostle out or interfere with another. Our Saviour, in His reply, also intimates the near approach of His dissolution. He speaks of himself as if already dead, and this act of Mary as an anticipation of His funeral obsequies. "In that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Our Saviour never once condemns this expression of gratitude, because it led to no substantial result, or grudged the expense incurred in it as a robbery of the poor. On the contrary, He enters with warmest sympathy into the kindness which prompted it, and responds to it with cordial and delighted acknowledgment.

We see here the certain evidence of the want of all sincere and devoted attachment to the Saviour, on the part of the traitor. He had no sympathy with the sentiments of Mary's heart—no approbation of this mode of rendering to Him honour. The bag was his idol; and to distend it with the precious ore, he was quite willing to overlook the claims of his friend and Master. Covetousness was the ruling passion of his heart, and this had frozen into utter apathy all its finer sensibilities. Why, it may be asked, had this man enrolled himself amongst the number of Christ's disciples, and even mingled with that select few who

were in constant attendance on His person ? The reason of this it is easy to explain. He shared in the general delusion that the Saviour had in view to erect a *temporal* sovereignty, and to surround Himself with the state and grandeur of an earthly kingdom. The expectation of this was motive enough to attach him to the interest of the Saviour, and even the privilege of carrying the bag was not without its attraction, to a mind so selfish and mercenary as his. But we see here, when Christ's claims were stated in opposition to those of his own covetousness, that he shewed at once which had the ascendancy within him. He preferred his own aggrandisement to the honour of his Master, and was willing to sacrifice the one to the gratification of the other. Let Christ's interests harmonise with those of self, and he owned a ready subjection to Him ; but when Christ and self were contraries, he at once deserted Him.

This suggests to us the grand practical lesson which we should learn at this entertainment ; it is the principle which will alone secure our faithful adherence to the Saviour, as contrasted with that which is certain to lead to a desertion of Him. Mary and Judas here stand out as types of two opposite characters, the one of which contains in it the substance of all Christian worth, the other is wholly destitute of its radical and constituent element. In the picture which we are now contemplating, this is the object of most prominent exhibition. All the other incidents cluster around this as the grand and central subject of the piece. We see

Mary cherishing a devoted attachment to the Saviour, and ready to make any sacrifice with a view to its gratification. We see Judas, on the other hand, seeking his own aggrandisement as the object of supreme concern, and to secure this, grudging a pot of spikenard which was devoted to the honour of his Master. In the heart of the one, love of the Saviour was the ascendant principle; in the other, it was the interest of self. This, therefore, is the grand distinction between a child of God and a child of Satan. There must be a *decided preference* of Christ above all else besides, or there is no security for a faithful and devoted adherence to Him, when *His* interest draws one way, and *our own* another. We may otherwise be willing to follow Him in the sunshine, but we will desert Him in the storm. Judas was a friend of Christ, so long as no sacrifice was exacted of him, and his imagination revelled in the prospect of anticipated honours, in that kingdom to which he was looking forward. But when Christ's exaltation was *his own humiliation*, the secret of his hypocrisy came out, and he betrayed his utter want of a sincere and devoted attachment to Him.

There is many a Judas in the Church at the present hour! many a cold and hollow-hearted Christian! who are as unwilling as he was to make any sacrifice for the honour of the Saviour. The bag is their great attraction to Him, or, what is the very same thing, they contrive to reconcile their own interest with His, or they would make no profession of His name. Their code of practical duty exacts of them no sacrifice, and

this relaxed and accommodating system which they have adopted, is what alone detains them in His service. Christ and self are *never* contraries with them, and, therefore, they have no motive to abjure a jurisdiction, which bears on them with such mild and gentle authority. Our Saviour represents the duty we owe to Him in a very different light from this. He lays down *self-denial* as the very condition of our allegiance to Him. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." There must be self-denial, or we are strangers to the work which Christ imposes on us. The heart of Judas is ours, when we either have in view to make a gain of godliness, or when our godliness leaves us in the full and easy possession of our gain.

The character of Mary exhibits to us a very different aspect from this. Her heart was full of love to the Saviour. She cherished toward Him an attachment, which had subordinated to itself every other sentiment within her, and which made no hesitation to submit to any sacrifice which might subserve His honour. She was willing to impoverish herself, if Christ were thereby exalted; and whatever she could render to Him, she considered as too mean an offering for His acceptance. She never thought of any more worthy object to which her ointment could be devoted, than to perfume His sacred person, and to give it additional value, she poured out her heart along with it in acts of low-

liest prostration and obeisance. Devotedness to the Saviour, then, is the virtue which here commends her to our esteem and admiration ; and this must be contrasted with that spirit of cold and interested selfishness, which marks the character of the traitor. The one is of divine inspiration—the other is of hell, and all the more so, if its turpitude is veiled under the garb of a Christian profession. Christ must have *our whole heart*, or He disowns us altogether as His children. To attempt to share it with the world, is the same as to incur the guilt of idolatry, and to raise against Him the standard of open and declared rebellion.

Let us go, then, to this feast as a medium through which we may obtain a view of what is in the heart. We may there see Mary in all the warmth of a devoted affection, seeking the exaltation of her Saviour, and grudging no sacrifice by which this might be promoted. We see Judas at the same time attempting to seize with rapacious grasp on the scanty offering which was devoted to this object, and to alienate it to his own aggrandisement. With all this, however, the traitor contrived to throw a deep and subtle veil over his hypocrisy, and to sustain, even in the estimation of the other apostles, the credit of a pious and reputable character. In all probability he was no less ignorant of himself, at the present moment, than others were, and would have shrunk with sensitive aversion from the commission of the crime, with which he was afterwards chargeable. We may learn from all this, how little our true character is known either to ourselves or others,

and how ignorant we are of the qualities which a change of situation might develope in it. Judas was in heart the enemy of Christ; and had Satan been embodied in a visible person to resist the progress of His cause, the traitor would have deserted to his interest and aided him in the vile attempt. How humiliating a consideration is this, that even an apostle, mingling in daily intercourse with the Saviour, and wearing all the external badges of discipleship, was in heart on Satan's side, and would have made an open and unreserved declaration of this, had Satan unfurled his banners in the broad light of day! The champion of heaven would have become the champion of hell, and sought the establishment of the kingdom of darkness. May we not all tremble at the thought of this, and see from it a deeper emphasis of meaning in the exhortation of the Apostle—"Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Here is an apostle coming short, and what reason then have we to fear!

CONCLUSION.

WE have now completed our survey of the family of Bethany, and the reader will agree with us in thinking that it has every claim to be denominated "THE MODEL FAMILY." The aspect which sits most conspicuous on it is the simple and truthful character of its members. They were all the sincere friends of Jesus, and this is the secret of the harmony which reigned in their dwelling. We are thus warranted in drawing the conclusion from the whole scene which has passed before us—that THE SPIRIT OF THE SAVIOUR IS THE GRAND CONSERVATIVE ELEMENT OF FAMILIES. It binds their members in closer union to one another—it adds to the strength of natural affection, and warms it into piety—it seasons every enjoyment with increased relish, and soothes every sorrow by the sense of a sympathy at once disinterested and hallowed—it establishes a common interest, and draws the whole heart around it—it improves the temper, gives delicacy to the conscience, and, in short, realises those very conditions, without which there can be no true, or lasting, or comfortable union. It may well be supposed that, when Jesus becomes MASTER of the house, peace and happiness will be introduced to it. Nay!

we maintain, that they never will be met with when this is not the case. NATURE alone is not adequate to this result—GRACE must combine with it; and then the family will be at once a holy and a happy one.

This gives us a most interesting view of the character of the Saviour as *the Master of our households!* The family of Bethany shews us what *kind* of Master He is. He is at once mild, and tender, and sympathising, delighting in the happiness of all, and ministering to every want. Let Him be honoured in this capacity in every dwelling, and heaven would at once descend to earth. Where Jesus reigns, there must be a balm to every sorrow, and a rich experience of divine delight!

Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would realise this blessed and desirable result, multiplying amongst us *copies* of this MODEL family! The social problem would thus meet with a ready and practical solution. Political nostrums, as a panacea to our evils, would be no more heard of, and RIGHTEOUSNESS would be seen to be that alone which made us happy. Except we acknowledge Jesus to be the Master of our several households, all the devices of human policy will never contribute to our substantial advantage. Religion must perform the work of social amelioration, if it is to be done at all; and the diffusion of the spirit of Jesus is what alone will carry every blessing in its train. Let Bethany be multiplied, and heaven, in its *happiness* as well as holiness, is begun!







